CSR Talk and Context: A Case Study

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Abstract

The purpose of this thesis is to examine how strategizing by corporate social responsibility (CSR) practitioners is discursively constituted and enacted from context-based discourses in a single case study. This research takes a qualitative interpretative approach in which realities are discursively enacted. I draw on work that emphasizes an understanding of strategizing as discursively enacted and in which practices and practitioners are socially constituted and embedded. Research data comprise semi-structured interviews with 45 middle managers with formal responsibilities for implementing different aspects of CSR. Interview data are supported by meeting observations and informal interactions that inform an understanding of the context.

The case study findings focus on how CSR talk shaped by localised discourses constitutes the 'becoming' of CSR practices and practitioners. The findings are interpreted from the organizational studies perspective of how individuals live and adapt in complex and contested organizational contexts and the implications for organizing in the field of CSR. The findings are discussed in three sections. First, I focus on the identity-intense nature of CSR discourse in the case study context. I explore how research participants appropriate CSR to construct moral certainty and positive realities that distance them from antagonistic identities associated with the uncertain moral nature of the work place setting. Second, I discuss how constructing CSR practices to observe localised strategy discourses has implications for organizing, subduing CSR strategizing and the agency of CSR practitioners in ways that conform with existing understandings and status quo arrangements. Third, I discuss the findings from the perspective of CSR discourse as a quest by CSR practitioners for narrative legitimacy in an organization, as well as a compromise which can involve the marginalization of ethical concerns.

The primary contribution of this thesis is that it offers a 'thick' sociologically grounded case study exploration of how CSR discourse can be appropriated, constituted and enacted to facilitate identity work that enables CSR practitioners to deal with contradictions and anxieties in the workplace setting. Such appropriation can aid the construction of realities purporting moral certainty. The thesis offers new insights into the links between identity work and the construction of CSR practices, as well as the constitution of roles and identities of middle managers with formal CSR responsibilities. It contributes to a range of literatures in organization studies, including those on ethics and identities, the discursive internal dynamics of CSR, its discursive interplay with strategy discourses, and how CSR practitioners are both constrained by and constrain the practices constructed in the context in which they work.

List of abbreviations

CCO - Communication as Constitutive of Organizations

CDA – Critical Discourse Analysis

FDA - Food and Drug Administration

FY – Financial Year

ILO – International Labour Organization

ISC – Internal Social Criticism

NGO - Non-Governmental Organization

PBN - Pharmacy Benefit Network

ROI – Return on Investment

SDGs – Sustainable Development Goals

SWOT – Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats

TQM – Total Quality Management

WBA – Walgreens Boots Alliance

1: Introduction to the Thesis

1.1 Introduction

In 1959 Harvard economics professor Edward S. Mason wrote a book titled *The Corporation in Modern Society* arguing that it was philosophical questions, as opposed to economic ones, that would be the main concern of corporations in the future. Sixty years on Mason's observation is no less pertinent. A burning preoccupation with how companies generate wider benefits for stakeholders, not just shareholders, is reflected in academic and public debate about the contribution companies, in particular large corporations, make to society (Fleming and Spicer, 2007; Strange, 1996). At the heart of this debate often lies a certain disquiet about the extent businesses are and will be the solution to, or the problem behind social, economic and environmental challenges faced in a globalised 21st century (see for instance Banerjee, 2008b; Crane et al., 2008; Frederick, 2006; Klein, 2007; Korten, 2001; Moon et al., 2004). A key arena and framework for debating and gauging these questions has been the context of CSR[1] and the contribution businesses make to improving society through their CSR outcomes (see for instance Fleming and Jones, 2013; Rasche et al., 2017; Scherer et al., 2006; Scherer and Palazzo, 2007 and 2011). This thesis contributes to these broad discussions about CSR not by researching at the organization level (as reflected in scholarship on CSR activities with external stakeholders, political CSR,[2] CSR reporting and CSR communications), but by focusing on CSR strategizing by individuals within the firm. In selecting a research orientation based on the internal dynamics of implementing CSR, the hope is to generate better insights and understanding of CSR outcomes as called for by Aguinis and Glavas (2012) and Basu and Palazzo (2008). To do this I investigate CSR from the perspective of CSR practices and practitioners as they discursively construct *doing* CSR in a complex internal organizational context.

This chapter provides an overview of my thesis. I situate my research within qualitative approaches to CSR concerned with CSR talk (Christensen et al., 2013; Schoeneborn et al., 2019) and the study of strategizing as a social practice. The approach to strategizing I follow explains the difference between strategy plans and strategy outcomes as often shaped not by deliberate action, but by socially embedded discourses within organizations (Balogun et al.,

[1] This thesis draws on the definition of CSR as a firm's *"actions that appear to further some social good, beyond the interests of the firm and that which is required by law"* (McWilliams and Siegel, 2001:1).
[2] For a full discussion of political CSR see Scherer et al. (2016).

2014), and a *"dwelling mode, in which agent identities and their strategies are simultaneously co-constructed relationally through direct engagement with the world they inhabit"* (Chia and Holt, 2006:637). The contested nature of CSR has inspired much academic debate. My review of the literature established early that extant CSR research resided mainly within in a few key theoretical domains often based on a functionalist view of knowledge (Crane and Glozer, 2016; Crane et al., 2018). Empirical studies of the context-based social construction of CSR have been rare (for exceptions see Costas and Kärreman, 2013; Crane, 2000; Humphreys and Brown, 2008). In-depth studies of how managers implement CSR have only recently begun to emerge (see Gond et al., 2018; Hengst et al., 2019; Kok et al., 2017). These observations together with my curiosity about the role of CSR managers (and middle managers in general), and my interest in strategizing, quickly drew me towards an inquiry into how practitioners *do* CSR in organizations, and to reflections on questions such as 'what does the activist look like in a corporation?', 'Who are they, and what do they do?', 'How do they interact with others?', 'How do they deal with the complexities of a firm's moral and ethical competence?', and 'What is an outcome to them?' Academically, such questions touched on organizational scholarly philosophy regarding the ontology of agency and structure (Bourdieu, 1977 and 1990; Giddens, 1984) and divisions and connectivity between micro, meso and macro (Parsons and Shills, 1962; Wiley, 1988).

Concerned to avoid micro-isolationism (Seidl and Whittington, 2014:1408), I found Vaara and Whittington's focus on understanding managerial agency[3] within a *"web of practices"* (2012:286), which connect to outcomes and wider societal phenomena (Balogun et al., 2014; Jarzabkowski and Spee, 2009; Nicolini, 2016), offered a useful theoretical springboard. When combined with a 'thick' practice perspective (Reckwitz, 2002; Schatzki, 2006; Shove et al., 2012) this view of agency as a 'web of practices' opened, rather than narrowed, the horizons of my research project. Returning to the CSR literature I reappraised the few extant discussions about the significance of CSR and its meaning as discussed by Costas and Kärreman (2013) and Schoeneborn et al. (2019), not from a functional point of view, but with a sensitivity to the performative perspective (such as those offered by Austin, 1962; Searle 1995 and 2008). For instances, we know very little about what CSR talk is actually *doing* in an organization, how the way CSR is discursively constructed during interaction with other discourses influences the constitution of CSR as a practice, the people involved in *doing* CSR, and the very nature of what it means to *do* CSR in large 21st century organizations.

[3] The approach to agency taken in this study is discussed in sub-section 2.3.5

1.2 Contribution

My thesis aims to contribute to academic debates in organization studies and CSR literatures about the nature of CSR strategizing. I approach this from the perspective of *doing* CSR in complex, modern and often contested, messy organizations (Mintzberg, 1994; Quinn, 1988; Sonenshein, 2005; Tsoukas, 2018; Weaver 2006). Stressing the contingent and precarious nature of the individual (Harding, 2008), I investigate the discursive way in which middle managers with formal CSR responsibilities (referred to hereafter as CSR practitioners) appropriate and enact CSR. Informed by strategy as practice approaches, my thesis foregrounds practices as entwined with the practitioner (Jarzabkowski, 2015) who is constructing the self on a fluid basis (Brown, 2019) in response to multiple conflicting and antagonistic discourses (Hall, 1996). These contextual conflicts and antagonisms, well noted in the organization studies literature, but less central in the CSR literature, situate the CSR practitioner and their practice at the epicentre of organizational struggles for moral legitimacy. However, knowledge and understanding of how these individuals construct their world and are constructed by it is still limited (Gond et al., 2017), extant research having focused largely on CSR professionals (Risi and Wickert, 2017; Brès et al., 2019) or CSR consultants (Brès and Gond, 2014), and less on middle managers with formal CSR responsibilities. My thesis focuses attention on CSR practitioners and their practices, situating them in their role as middle managers at the centre of debates on how moral and social responsibilities in companies are enacted. The thesis engages with these organizational members both as carriers of practice (Reckwitz, 2002; Shove et al., 2012), and key managerial agents shaping CSR.

To do this I focus on the organization as a plurivocal (Brown et al., 2005) and pluristic (Denis et al., 2007) discursive site where individuals construct different and competing realities drawing from available and contradictory discourses as resources to enact preferences and desires as well as dispel fears and anxieties. This focus on the organization as a fluid and dynamic discursive site foregrounds an understanding of *"the significance of language for the very existence of human social reality"* (Searle, 2008:444). In this regard, CSR is one of many discourses offering a language from which organizational members (now-a-days) construct a life world and a sense of a good life (MacIntyre, 1985). Strategy discourse is another one of these discourses, possessing its own interpretation of 'good' and that which constitutes virtuous action (Tsoukas, 2018) through practices laden with *"teleoaffective structure"* (Schatzki, 2002:87). CSR discourse and strategy discourse are rarely considered from this perspective - as morally infused languages on which organizational members build to construct notions of 'good', and at the same time dispel darker, antagonistic discourses (Clarke et al., 2009). This approach to

organizations as discursive sites opens insight into how *"organizational realities are always contingent on the surrounding social field, such that understanding organizations and organizing practice requires analysis of the ways discourse shapes situated identities and actions"* (Kuhn and Putnam, 2014:417), and provides a glimpse into areas of organizational life not always easily available to the researcher.

My in-depth case study explores how understandings of CSR and strategy discourses constitute CSR practices at the U.S. healthcare pharma retail company Walgreens. I conducted interviews with a sample group of middle managers with formal CSR responsibilities to gather insights into how they appropriated CSR in the context of their organization, and to understand how they constructed and enacted CSR practices socially with others. The sample group of 45 CSR practitioners were all middle managers with differing levels of seniority, differing managerial modalities and differing thematic responsibilities for implementation, from environmental to diversity and ethical supply chain.

The findings contribute to the literature in four ways. First, the research offers an empirical example of how CSR practitioners appropriate CSR discourse as a flexible resource for various forms of identity work (Brown, 2015), invoking CSR to construct preferred realities as regards self and their organization, in particular desires for moral certainty (Knights and Clarke, 2014). In this respect, the case study sheds light on the social practices constituting the internal dynamics of CSR (Aguinis and Glavas, 2012; Basu and Palazzo, 2008; Gond et al., 2017). It expands debates about CSR as 'aspirational talk' (Christensen et al., 2013) by exploring how CSR practices can be grounded in identity constructions intimately entwined with localised antagonistic discourses associated with the workplace setting (Clarke et al., 2009). The case study also offers an example of how CSR discourse grounded in identity construction can generate self-referential and self-enclosed CSR talk that favours CSR practices as narrative making talk (Christensen et al., 2013; Schoeneborn et al., 2019).

Second, the case makes an empirical contribution to the identities and ethics literature by offering an example of how identity work (Brown, 2015) interfaces with discursive processes of neutralization (Umphress and Bingham, 2011). By exploring how CSR practitioners perpetuate, forgive or rationalize practices they view as morally incoherent or at odds with stated organizational CSR ambitions, the case offers a glimpse of how internal criticism on ethical issues can be inhibited (Sonenshein, 2005). It also contributes to theoretical conversations about the circumstances in which individual moral identity ambition may (or may not) lead to better

organizational moral outcomes through processes of positive organizational identity association (Weaver, 2006).

Third, the findings contribute to the strategy as practice and practice literature by showing empirically how discursively observing the performance of different, sometimes competing, localised strategy discourses can constrain the enactment and maintenance of new practices (Seidl, 2007; Shove et al., 2012), in this case CSR practices (Carollo and Guerci, 2017; Hengst et al., 2019; Wickert and De Bakker, 2018). The findings show how such adherence can lead to fragmented and disconnected CSR practices (Anesa et al., 2019), and the implications on uneven, contradictory or selective outcomes (Soderstrom and Weber, 2019). In the strategy as practice field, the findings also contribute to debates about the linkages between practices and practitioners by shedding light on how fragmented practices are entwined with fragmented role and identity construction.

Fourth, the findings extend debates about the role and identities of CSR practitioners (Brès et al., 2019; Brès and Gond, 2014; Risi and Wickert, 2017; Wright and Nyberg, 2012) in particular as middle managers by exploring sociologically how context enables and constrains them. In this respect, the findings offer an empirical example of the precarious and fragmented selves CSR practitioners may construct in the context of real or perceived antagonisms toward corporation practices on the one hand, and on the other, internal organizational discourses privileging strategy practices. This adds to literatures on inconsistencies in CSR outcomes (Christensen et al., 2013; Schoeneborn et al., 2019) by articulating a link between the discursive constitution of CSR practitioners and their practices.

Taken as a whole, the thesis' findings theorise that the greater a CSR practitioner's sense of the antagonisms toward a firm (whether related to the genre of the corporation, a particular sector type such as pharmaceutical or gas and oil, or a particular egregious event), and the more rapacious the internal observance of strategy discourses, the less likelihood there may be of CSR practitioners constructing a coherent and agentive moral self as a CSR practitioner, or coherent and agentive CSR practices.

1.3 Overview of Methodology

My thesis explores how discourses shape CSR practices and the role and identities of individual CSR practitioners. For this I adopted a methodology that was exploratory and sensitive to context, following a nominalist ontology that argues that *"social reality is no more than the creation of people through language and discourse"* (Easterby-Smith et al., 2012:21). The work is epistemologically committed to a view of knowledge creation through the exploration of understandings created by individuals in context and the insights these offer as regards their reality (Berger and Luckmann, 1966). My research approach was characterized by a focus on *"doings and sayings"* (Schatzki, 1996:89) as windows through which researchers can explore how understandings are constituted in complex contexts and in relation to topics such as practice and practitioners. Adopting a social constructionist approach for this research was consistent with practice-based theories focusing on the constitution of social life through language, discourses and other non-verbal activities (Schatzki 1996). In this view meanings are not fixed entities that can be discovered and that exist independent of the researcher. Rather, *"social constructionist views share with philosophical hermeneutics the broad critique of meaning as an object, and they display an affinity with the notion of the coming into being of meaning"* (Schwandt, 2003:307).

My interpretive study followed a tradition in which the researcher is bricoleur. *"The interpretive bricoleur produces a bricolage – that is, a pieced-together set of representations that are fitted to the specifics of a complex situation"* (Denzin and Lincoln, 2003:5). Researchers in this tradition draw on whatever strategies, methods, tools or empirical materials are available, and *"the choices as to which interpretive practices to employ are not necessarily set in advance"* (Ibid: 6). The *"choices of research practices depends upon the questions that are asked, and the questions depend on the context"* (Nelson et al., 1992:2), and what is practically feasible for the researcher to do in the setting. In this respect, access arrangements that materialised once in the field location forestalled sharing of official documentary material and reduced the participant observation opportunities afforded. Semi-structured interviews provided the majority of empirical data, while a small number of observations and multiple varied interactions during the research period provided sound understanding of my research context. My literature review supported the formulation of my research questions and an initial interview guide which I subsequently adapted in the field. In interpreting my findings, I followed an understanding of my data as offering a momentary glimpse into key aspects of practice that mattered to my research participants (Cooren et al., 2015).

1.4 Ethics

All researchers, including academic researchers, have ethical duties. At the simplest level these duties refer to the principles of doing “no harm” and of “informed consent”. In the academic field, doing no harm assumes that scholarly research is instigated for social good and care is taken to ensure respect and well-being of research participants. Informed consent is required from participants to ensure they both understand the nature of the research they partake in (Christians, 2003), as well as consent to the use of their data (Taylor, 2001). Building trust and maintaining openness were therefore key concerns in my research, as was how I introduced an informed consent procedure. The research objectives were explained to participants in advance of the interview and at the beginning of the interview. I also explained the academic purpose of the research and my intention to publish in academic journals.

In terms of individual participants, attention and sensitivity was paid to the potentially political nature of the data collected during interview. I took appropriate steps to ensure anonymity and agreed levels of disclosure at the start, during, and post-interview. For instance, I declined a request from my key contacts for feedback from some specific interviews. In addition, in presenting data I have disaggregated functions and seniority, and randomised numbering and sequencing of each interview to preserve anonymity and ensure participants would not ‘guess’ interviewees by their hierarchy, role, or by the stage at which they were interviewed.

I did not discuss with participants any critical reasoning related to the research project, though for some research participants it was clear and welcome that I engaged on the topic of continued tobacco sales by the firm. In this regard, I maintained complete openness. Continued tobacco sales by the firm came to my attention as a concern expressed by research participants during early conversations preparing the research. It was therefore not a topic on my preliminary interview guide, but was incorporated subsequently.

1.5 Structure of the Thesis

This thesis consists of nine chapters: Following this introduction, chapter 2 sets out a review of the literature for my research study. First, I discuss (in section 2.1) how the phenomenon/meaning of CSR resides in a contested and unstable discursive arena giving rise to a complex public and organizational landscape of competing moral and managerial discourses. This I argue throughout the chapter is important because it is from these ambiguous and contested discursive spaces that managers concerned with CSR draw to construct themselves and construct and maintain organizing processes in their organization. In section 2.2 I first provide an overview of organizational level theories that have dominated CSR research to date (sub-sections 2.2.1-2.2.4). I then argue in sub-sections 2.2.5 and 2.2.6 that critical and constitutive approaches raise promising ontological perspectives, in particular one based on CSR as discursively constituted, on which to base a study of CSR strategizing. In sub-sections 2.2.7 and 2.2.8 I review extant scholarly research into CSR practices and practitioners arguing that insight into CSR outcomes can be generated from a sociological in-depth exploration of how CSR is constructed and practiced in context. The aim of the next section (2.3), is to argue that a strategy as practice approach, in particular one based in a 'thick' and sociologically informed understanding of practice, offers a promising approach for developing new insights into CSR strategizing. I first discuss (in sub-section 2.3.1) the fundamentals of strategy as practice research which have shown how strategizing is socially embedded, takes place in messy organizational contexts, in contradictory, contested and multi-authored scenarios, where practitioners and practices are understood as entangled. In sub-section 2.3.2 I focus on strategizing and discourse. Sub sub-section 2.3.2.1 clarifies the approach my study takes to discursive legitimation. This is followed by an overview of praxis and practice (sub-section 2.3.3) and practice theory (sub-section 2.3.4), clarifying the sociological understandings adopted for my study. Sub-section 2.3.5 discusses how practitioners are both enabled and constrained by context arguing that this complexity as regards agency is best captured by considering practitioners as 'carriers of practice'. Sub-section 2.3.6 clarifies the understandings of identity adopted for this study and suggests that how CSR practitioners construct self in relation to dominant strategy discourses in their organization is a key question for my study. The next section (2.4) outlines my research questions, and the final section (2.5) concludes the literature review.

Chapter 3 discusses methodology. The introduction (3.1) sets out the advantages of a qualitative case study approach and summarises the chapter. Section 3.2 discusses the philosophical debates associated with my methodological choice of interpretive research and discursive enquiry, as well as the main debates in discourse scholarship, its varied philosophical underpinnings and organizational discourse as a genre. Section 3.3 details data and data collection methods including research design and case study specifications (sub-section 3.3.1), sub-sections (3.3.2 to 3.3.6) detail my approach to the research conducted during the two research field trips. The next section (3.4) explains my data analysis methods, and then section 3.5 explains the process of reflexivity as I experienced it throughout the research project. Chapter 4 presents the case study organization and is divided into two sections. The first section 4.1 offers a description of the case context, including history based on the firm's official history book titled *Pharmacist to the Nation* written by Kogan and Kogan (1989). Using interview data and news reports I piece together a contextual description of the organization's business approach, organizational culture and organizational identity. The second section 4.2 presents an overview of CSR at Walgreens before 2014, and after 2014 when a new CSR strategy was introduced.

Chapters 5, 6 and 7 present my research findings. Chapter 5, section 5.1 begins by focusing on how in the case study setting CSR talk and text was appropriated as an 'object' through which research participants affirmed the virtuous nature of their setting: the organization and those with whom they were significantly related in the workplace. This chapter is divided into three more sections: section (5.2) presents an analysis of how CSR practitioners constituted CSR talk to morally protagonize the organization, narrativizing, dignifying and ennobling the firm, constituting it on the *good*, not the dark, side of business. This section details how CSR practitioners stabilized moral uncertainties in their workplace, banishing actual or perceived negative or antagonistic discourses. Section (5.3) explores how CSR practitioners arranged CSR talk in familiar ways that 'othered' the firm's competitors and critics, constituting certainty of differentiation. Section 5.4 explores how CSR practitioners constructed material objects (text such as official stories, statements and reports) in ways that helped self-reference and objectify a preferred version of self and organizational moral standing.

In chapter 6, I first explain in section 6.1 the five discursive sites of practice identified in the research process. These sites are then explored in section 6.2. Sub-section 6.2.1 explores how CSR practices were constituted to observe prevailing business strategy practices. The next sub-section (6.2.2), explores how CSR practitioners discursively constituted CSR as a resource for emulating the achievement of internal rewards and, sub-section (6.2.3) explores how CSR

practitioners constructed and positioned their roles. In the subsequent sub-section (6.2.4), the analysis explores how CSR was constituted in ways that helped mitigate the presumed workplace anxieties and antagonisms of others. The last sub-section (6.2.5) explores data showing how CSR practitioners constructed CSR as an opportunity for positive self-identity work. Section 6.3 concludes this chapter. Chapter 7 focuses on CSR in the context of a single-issue dispute and CSR practitioners' responses to Walgreens' continued tobacco sales. After explaining the context in section 7.2, data presented in the sub-sections of section 7.3 show how CSR practitioners' talk discursively transitioned from statements that objected to the moral contradiction posed by continued tobacco sales by a healthcare provider, to statements that also reproduced and sustained the contradiction. Drawing from familiar discourses the analysis explores how research participants discursively moved from potential moral agent, through to moral bystanders, moral apologists, strategy defenders, and organizational champions, taking up various compromises and contradictory accommodations. Section 7.4 concludes the chapter.

Chapter 8 discusses different interpretations of the findings, based on three different theoretical readings generated from repeated reflections throughout the research journey. These readings are designed to focus on wider managerial and sociological debates about the nature of agency in organizations and the way discourse influences organizing in organizations. The first reading in section 8.2 explores the research findings from the case study perspective. To do this I explore the findings through two questions raised by Tsoukas (2009a). The first question is 'what is going on here?', and the second question is 'what is this a case of?' The key finding from the case study discussed in this section is the identity intensive nature of CSR appropriation in the case study context, and the interfacing of identity with CSR. The second reading in section (8.3) develops an interpretation of the case study findings from the perspective of strategy as practice and practice theory. This section explores the research findings specifically in relation to the localised interaction between strategy and CSR discourses. The reading is concerned with the particular insights this interaction offers for the constitution of CSR practices and CSR practitioners, and implications for the enactment and outcomes of CSR more broadly, as a social practice within organizations. The third reading in section 8.4 follows a discourse theoretical lens to discuss the case study findings in relation to wider social phenomena. The aim of this section is twofold. First, it explores how individual constructions that are often contradictory in isolation helped constitute loose, but shared, forms of narrative legitimation and compromise making. Second, the section explores how these smaller loosely-distributed discourses are linked to larger discourses within a nexus of economic, political and social structures. Section 8.5 draws the discussion to a close highlighting some limitations in the research. Chapter 9 concludes the thesis and details the contribution this research project makes to relevant academic literatures.

2: Literature Review

2.1 Introduction

This chapter sets out a review of the literature relevant to my research study. Following this introduction, I explore (in section 2.2) key research fields associated with CSR in management studies, as well as extant research associated with internal CSR strategizing. The section discusses key theoretical and research perspectives, including critical and constitutive approaches that have drawn attention to the need to understand CSR as a phenomenon that is discursively talked into being. Focusing on calls to expand knowledge of the local internal organizational dynamics where CSR is constructed, the section finishes by reviewing what we know about CSR practices and CSR practitioners. The next section (2.3) argues that a strategy as practice approach, in particular one based in a 'thick' and sociologically informed understanding of practice, offers a promising approach for developing new insights into CSR strategizing in organizations. Section 2.4 clarifies the research questions, and in section 2.5 I draw some concluding remarks about the relevance of the study.

In common with most concepts concerned with morality (such as religion, democracy, human rights, ethics, spirituality, values), CSR discourse is no different in being open to broad interpretation, ambiguity and frequent debate (Humphreys and Brown, 2008: Cantó-Milà and Lozano, 2009; Carroll: 1979 and 1999; Guthey and Morsing, 2014). This should come as no surprise, if we understand CSR as an expression of company attempts to grapple with philosophical moral questions regarding its role and contribution to society (Mason, 1959), and the implications of that for organizational management. Differing views on how firms are situated in society give rise to different views about their responsibilities, about the nature of these responsibilities, about to whom the business accounts for these responsibilities, and the nature of legitimate business activity. Mason (1959) underlined the importance of these philosophical questions, as opposed to economic ones, that he predicted would face corporations in the future. Though corporate philanthropy has existed for centuries, since the 1980s a key arena and framework for debating these questions has been

the field of CSR.[4] However, this arena is discursively unstable and in a *"continuing state of emergence"* (Lockett et al., 2006:133). Such instability gives rise to a complex and contested landscape of moral and managerial discourses from which managers concerned with CSR draw to construct themselves, and the practices that ultimately shape CSR outcomes.

As companies grow in size and involvement in societal questions so too does curiosity into the purpose, quality and relevance of a firm's social impacts (see for example Locke, 2013; Whiteman et al., 2013; Wickert et al., 2016). However, overall we do not yet have the research tools or methodologies to properly measure and understand such impacts, either at firm level or the level of the community. As Crane et al. observed in their review of challenges facing business and society research, *"any shift from company-oriented output measures to community or ecosystem outcome and impact measures raises a host of conceptual, methodological, and practical problems"* (2018:13). Equally, an understanding of CSR as 'things' and areas of activities has at times led to a search by academics, researchers and critics for the gaps between that promised 'talk' and that delivered 'walk' (Christensen et al., 2013), to ascertain the extent of progress in corporate responsibility (see for example Adams, 2002; Rasmus and Montiel, 2005; Visser et al., 2010). According to Christensen et al. (2013) this quest has often proven fruitless, for as many 'good' examples of CSR that exist, there are plenty of 'bad' examples, even within the same firm. Therefore, to develop new knowledge the central tenet of this thesis is that proposed by Basu and Palazzo (2008) who argued that we can learn about CSR outcomes by understanding more about the internal dynamics of CSR. In other words, rather than examining the most visible public manifestations of CSR that many argue are often constituted for us to perceive in certain ways (as symbolic impression management, Wickert and Cornelissen, 2017), we can gain insight by exploring less visible sociological elements of CSR that are implicated in its becoming and enactment by individuals.

2.2 Approaches to CSR

The aim of this section (2.2) is to argue that research into the internal dynamics of CSR within organizations can offer fresh insights into how CSR is practiced and its implications on CSR outcomes. The first four sub-sections (2.2.1 to 2.2.4) discuss briefly four key

[4] Lockett et al. make the point that CSR is not an academic discipline but a field with highly permeable boundaries. See appendix 10.1 for the definition of the field.

theories[5] that have shaped academic approaches to CSR at the organizational level in terms of how firms understand and enact CSR (Aguinis and Glavas, 2012). These first four sub-sections offer an overview of the prevailing, and sometimes overlapping, approaches to CSR research and provide a context for discussing alternative approaches. Sub-section 2.2.5 discusses critical scholarship in the field of CSR literature that underlines the significance of the contested nature of CSR, challenging some assumptions of the aforementioned theories, refuting their legitimacy and authenticity. I then introduce the constitutive view of CSR (sub-section 2.2.6) which conceptualises CSR as a discursive arena for constructing legitimacy and creating aspirations with organizing properties (Cooren, 2000) which will not necessarily reflect an objective reality. I then narrow the focus of the review onto the internal dynamics of CSR within organizations, CSR strategizing and *doing* CSR, opening up individual level perspectives to CSR (Gond et al., 2017). Here, I review extant literature concerned with CSR practices (sub-section 2.2.7), and CSR practitioners (sub-section 2.2.8). I argue that a sociological study embracing social embeddedness, relational dimensions and the situated and contested nature of CSR offers potential for developing new insights into the interplay between CSR practices, CSR practitioners and CSR outcomes.

2.2.1 Stakeholder Theory

As a key concept in CSR scholarship, stakeholder theory explicates how businesses should understand and organize CSR endeavours. In stakeholder theory (Freeman, 1984), the business organization exists within an environment populated by stakeholders. Each of these affects or is affected by the firm's purpose. Freeman defined stakeholders as, *"Any group or individual who can affect or is affected by the achievement of the firm's objectives"*, (1984:25). According to stakeholder theory, the firm's survival and financial performance is determined by its relationships with stakeholders that are, in turn, determined by how the firm is viewed by these stakeholders. In this view stakeholder interaction is both central (Carroll 1979; Freeman 1984) and justifiably demanded of business (Carroll and Shabana, 2010; Whetten et al., 2001). As such, stakeholder theory considers CSR a social contract that offers organizations a "licence to operate" (Cornelissen 2004; Dowling and Pfeffer 1975; Guthrie and Parker 1990; Suchman 1995). This view extended the narrow profit-making orientation of businesses focused on shareholder value (Friedman, 1970), to an alignment of business practices with social expectations.

[5] Other theories include integrative social contract theory, corporate constitutionalism and political CSR.

Although the range of individuals and groups with a legitimate stake in the company, and to whom the company has a responsibility, differs from firm to firm, stakeholder groups may include: employees; customers; suppliers; communities; government; financiers; owners; consumer practitioners; the media; environmentalists and other special interest groups. A major feature of stakeholder theory is the notion that the need to respect the rights and meet the interests of stakeholders implies that such groups and individuals should be able to influence, including participate in, managerial decisions that affect their welfare (Crane et al., 2004).

Within stakeholder theory, two approaches to guiding implementation of CSR have emerged. The first, normative stakeholder theory, attempts to explain the reasons why firms should embrace stakeholder interests. Normative stakeholder theory pertains to moral judgment and is associated with the right thing to do (Donaldson and Preston, 1995; Rasche et al., 2017). It includes ethical approaches based on freedoms and compliance with universal human rights and international law (Freeman and Philips, 2002), strategies designed to align with, and contribute to, sustainable development, and strategies that emphasize the common good approach in line with numerous sets of religious and philosophical frameworks (Garriga and Melé, 2004). The second is instrumental stakeholder theory, which holds that it is in the firm's interest, and to its advantage, to take account of stakeholders (McWilliams and Siegel, 2001). According to this theory, companies must *"identify the stakeholders most critical to its survival and […] make sure that the satisfaction of their needs is paramount"* (Hill and Jones, 2001:45), because these stakeholders will contribute to the firm's strategic objectives.

The identification and selection of stakeholder groups to whom the firm should pay attention, and offer some level of accountability, has attracted much academic theorising (see for instance Bondy and Charles, 2018; Crane et al., 2004; Jensen and Sandstrom 2011; Kujala et al., 2017; Parent and Deephouse, 2007). The broader view of stakeholders, which considers all those who may be affected by the activities of the firm may, for managers operating within tight constraints, prove difficult to operationalise. The narrower understanding of stakeholders, in which groups are recognized according to their direct relevance to the firm's core economic interest and their contractual relationship, is therefore often a prevalent approach among practitioners (Pederson, 2010). In implementing

stakeholder theory Mitchell et al. (1997) identified power, legitimacy and urgency as the three key attributes likely to guide identification of salient stakeholders.

A stakeholder approach is often a preferred paradigm among management theorists and CSR practitioners (see for instance Barnett, 2007; Crane and Matten, 2004; Dahlsrud, 2008; Freeman et al., 2017a) because it is believed to improve trust, reputation and relations with stakeholders and make it easier to do business by reducing direct and indirect barriers and costs (Fombrun and Shanley, 1990). Proponents of the stakeholder approach to CSR argue that strategizing is the alignment of stakeholder interests with management social interests, which leads to socially acceptable outcomes (Freeman et al., 2017b; Filatotchev and Stahl, 2015). They also argue from a managerialist and positivist perspective that empirical research shows that stakeholders play a gatekeeper role over desirable intangible assets, such as employee goodwill and trust (Frank, 1996; McWilliams and Siegel, 2001; Turban and Greening, 1996) that over time enable businesses to gain competitive advantage (Eccles et al., 2011; Porter and Kramer, 2006).

Critics of stakeholder theory have argued that there is an inclination for the business to become distorted by the demands of the strongest interest groups (Gioia, 1999), whose motivations are not necessarily ethical (Scherer and Palazzo, 2007), and in which the organization is treated as the "*natural universal self"* marginalising those outside this narrow conception and treating them as "*other"* (Bondy and Charles, 2018). Some critics have also observed that CSR has been instrumentalized as a lifestyle tool to engage a key stakeholder group, corporate employees, dealing with the "*stigma of work itself"* and dehumanization in the workplace (Fleming and Jones, 2013:71). Instrumental stakeholder theory, involving the control of stakeholder perceptions (including employees) via impression management and public relations, has also been found to create reputational risks of being perceived negatively (Godfrey, 2005) or in a hypocritical light (Brunsson, 2003). Other potential risks include loss of control, high costs and perceptions of inconsistency (Crane and Matten, 2004). Stakeholder theory has been an influential discourse in shaping implementation of CSR and how organizations interact with society (Bondy and Charles, 2018). However, while it extends our understanding of complex stakeholder management issues that lead to inconsistencies in CSR outcomes, it doesn't explain why some firms are better than others at implementing CSR.

2.2.2 Institutional Theory

Another academic theory influential in explaining business approaches to CSR is institutional theory (DiMaggio and Powel, 1983). This theory concerns how organizations are influenced by the norms of their *external* environment and explains the reasons for homogenization amongst organizations within a common organizational field. DiMaggio and Powell (1983) define organizational field as:

> *...those organizations that, in the aggregate, constitute a recognized area of institutional life: key suppliers, resource and product consumers, regulatory agencies, and other organizations that produce similar services or products*. (1983:147)

According to institutional theory, organizational practices reflect the rules, beliefs and taken-for-granted assumptions of society around them, as this is the key mechanism for determining what is appropriate and gaining acceptance and legitimacy. Through varied processes of isomorphism, imitation or conforming to societal and cultural pressures, (referred to as the isomorphic adaptation strategy by Scherer et al. 2013), organizations adopt similar structures and procedures to those in their immediate environment becoming less distinct and more homogeneous (DiMaggio and Powell, 1983). Isomorphism is, *"a constraining process that forces one unit in a population to resemble other units that face the same set of environmental conditions"* (DiMaggio and Powell, 1983:149). DiMaggio and Powell (1983) identify three types of isomorphic process: coercive isomorphism involving pressure from external forces, such as powerful stakeholders; mimetic isomorphism whereby organizations mimic the practices of other organizations; and normative isomorphism relating to adoption of commonly held values. In this way institutional theory has helped explain why organizations, in particular large multinational companies operating across country borders, adopt complex CSR practices (Marano and Kostova, 2016) that appear contradictory or socially acceptable locally but may otherwise be inefficient (Surroca et al., 2013). Institutional theory also explains decoupling as the process by which organizations outwardly appear to adopt CSR practices that appear acceptable and appropriate according to prevailing social conventions, when in fact, inwardly practices are quite different (Kostova and Roth, 2002). Institutional theory further explains the reasons why multinational companies may adopt very different local CSR

practices to those prevailing internationally across the organization (Hah and Freeman, 2014; Husted and Allen, 2006).

In applying institutional theory to CSR, Matten and Moon (2008) hypothesize that CSR strategy in neoliberal economies, such as the U.K. and the U.S., evolves into an explicitly stated strategy because it has developed in institutionally weak environments. By extension, they argue that CSR strategy is implicit, more tacitly acknowledged and more likely to be taken-for-granted in countries where it is set within, and regulated and mediated by, a wider set of institutions. The inherent tension in this hypothesis lies between, on the one hand, following a CSR approach that emphasizes the importance of reporting, disclosure and communications, or, on the other hand, following a CSR approach that is internally orientated. Research has shown that explicit CSR strategies, that is, in environments with weak institutional frameworks, can incur reputational risks and a loss of legitimacy as customers and the wider public hold little faith in self-regulatory reporting systems adopting indifferent, sometimes cynical attitudes towards such strategies (Godfrey, 2005). Institutional theory has been an important theory in explicating how CSR outcomes vary at organizational level and lead to decoupling. However, its focus on institutional pressures on the firm, have arguably overemphasized the significance of the external environment and overshadowed the importance of how internal dynamics within organizations shape CSR outcomes (Basu and Palazzo, 2008). We know for instance from research in other fields that companies engaged in explicit CSR, or extensive CSR 'talk', tend to be large companies with more funds to spend on communications (Wickert et al., 2016).

2.2.3 Legitimacy Theory

Legitimacy theory is grounded in the idea that there is an implicit social contract between businesses and society and that society grants legitimacy to businesses that accord with society's expectations (Herzig and Kühn, 2017:199). The key feature of legitimacy theory is its treatment of CSR as a resource to generate legitimacy for the firm. For Suchman (1995:572), this relates to an *"organization's ability to instrumentally manipulate and deploy evocative symbols"* and therefore gain pragmatic legitimacy. On the one hand, organizations are seen as legitimate based on evaluations of the appropriateness of their goals (Dowling and Pfeffer, 1975). On the other hand, they are evaluated according to the ways that they appear to strategically connect the means and the ends (Berger et al., 1974). In his definition of legitimacy, Suchman emphasized that legitimacy is a generalized

umbrella concept that is socially constructed but transcending individual acts or individual judgements. He highlighted both the evaluative and the cognitive dimensions of legitimacy defining it as: *"a generalized perception or assumption that the actions of an entity are desirable, proper, or appropriate within some socially constructed system of norms, values, beliefs, and definitions"* (Suchman, 1995:574).

In the context of CSR research, legitimacy theory has been particularly associated with investigations into social reporting (Deegan, 2014) and how firms seek to appear legitimate via symbolic impression management and external reporting structures (Boiral, 2007). Research in this field sheds light on firms' sometimes spurious claims about their level of social and environmental impacts, as well as transparency and accountability to society. We know for instance that larger firms are likely to spend more on reporting in order to satisfy stakeholder pressures (Perez-Batres et al., 2012), and that *"companies sometimes position themselves as sustainable and drown the readers of their CSR reports in technical data but do no more than comply with basic environmental laws"* (Scherer and Palazzo, 2007:1114). However, we know little about how individuals in firms come to justify, agree and implement such accounts.

2.2.4 Strategic CSR

Since the early 2000s, the discourse on CSR has taken what might be termed a *"strategic turn"* (Vallentin and Spence, 2017:63). In its simplest form strategic CSR harnesses the discourse of strategy to argue that firms that do not contribute to society will eventually loose competitive advantage (Werther and Chandler, 2011). Focusing on an instrumental approach, strategic CSR advocates the incorporation of a CSR perspective within the firm's strategic planning and operations to maximise economic and social value (Haski-Leventhal, 2018). Importantly, instead of discussing *why* firms should embrace social responsibilities (to satisfy stakeholder demands or be perceived as legitimate) the discourse of strategic CSR centres debates on *how* firms strategize around social responsibilities.

This idea emerged in a *Harvard Business Review* (HBR) article in 2002 published by Porter and Kramer and was further developed by these authors as the concept of 'shared value' (Porter and Kramer, 2006 and 2011). In these publications the authors argue that their approach *"can give rise to the next major transformation of business thinking," "drive the*

next wave of innovation and productivity growth in the global economy," and *"reshape capitalism and its relationship to society"* (2011:4). Emphasizing the importance of aligning an organization's CSR to the company's strategy, 'shared value' promotes a resource-based view of the firm as having superior resources, knowledge, talent, power and networks to achieve large scale social change and improvements in alleviating poverty, food insecurity, even conflict and humanitarian disasters. This discourse argues that CSR can contribute to a firm's competitive advantage by prioritising a few selective social projects as investments, rather than costs, and by helping to win new market business. In particular Porter and Kramer define three basic cost-benefit approaches to creating shared value: *"re-conceiving products and markets, defining productivity in the value chain, and enabling local cluster development"* (in Vallentin and Spence, 2017:70). In this way strategic CSR is often associated with adherence to a traditional view of the firm as wealth creation for shareholders (Friedman, 1970), and therefore not an approach that supports alleviation of issues associated with corporate irresponsibility, or a vision for a better world, as 'better' in the 'shared value' sense means *"better opportunities for economic growth and prosperity"* (Ibid: 75).

Often referred to as the win-win approach (see for instance Fisher et al., 2009 and Voltan et al., 2017) because of its promised benefits to the firm as well as society at large, this view of CSR that purports to re-legitimize business and lead to ethical growth has been criticised as value blind (Vallentin and Spence, 2017). Some scholars have referred to it as naïve, shallow and simplistic (Crane et al., 2014). Others see it as perpetuating polarization between business and society by encouraging firms to treat the social and environmental as discrete, as opposed to central to business processes (Gao and Bansal, 2013). Despite this the 'shared value' approach enjoys widespread appeal amongst practitioners and some business schools and helps elevate social goals to strategic levels (Crane et al., 2014). Other scholars have also made the case that strategic CSR implies better management practices (Galbreath, 2009; Sharp and Zaidman, 2010).

2.2.5 Critical CSR

The contested nature of CSR discourse is academically expressed in terms of a body of critical scholarship into CSR. In this respect some scholars argue that philosophically, the current economic model with its focus on generating shareholder wealth cannot plausibly offer the larger part of society a responsible and ethical practice, and that CSR, including

business ethics[6], is merely pragmatic management of stakeholder groups and the environment (Dunne, 2008; Fleming and Jones, 2013; Rhodes, 2016; Vogel, 2006). These scholars have challenged the aforementioned theories and an often implicit assumption that CSR is positive for society. They highlight the underlying contradiction in the economic model between wealth accumulation by a few and wealth depletion of the majority, and evidence that firms do little to assist the global community with grand challenges or in curbing negative economic giga-trends (Fleming and Jones, 2013; Rhodes, 2016). For others, modern CSR is a product of neo-liberal ideology, a hoax, which encourages us, employees in particular, to see the 'good' moral acts of corporations and to forgive the atrocities (Banerjee, 2008a; Fleming and Jones, 2013). Taking a psychoanalytical perspective, scholars have also discussed a view of CSR (including sustainability) as fantasy (Parker, 2016), that helps employees cope with an omnipotent corporation and feelings of impotence and inequality (Gabriel, 1995 and 1999) or a lack of spiritual opportunities in the modern workplace (Bowles, 1989). CSR's apparent popularity in large firms (Wickert et al., 2016) has also been explained through its counter-weight to overloads in bureaucracy and technocracy, where social opportunities are perceived as weak, alienating or dull (Thyssen, 2011).

Critical theorists of CSR have been described as inclining toward a 'discourse of suspicion' (Ricoeur, 1970) in arguing *"that so-called 'socially responsible' activities can obscure the deeper contradictions and systems of valuation that enable corporate socio-economic domination,"* and in questioning *"whether corporate activities actually promote community interests"* (Kuhn and Deetz, 2008:2). Kuhn and Deetz suggest that: *"such claims are valuable and necessary in our understanding of CSR, but they tend to overlook corporate decisional processes"* (Ibid). Kuhn and Deetz's suggestion for moving forward is to investigate *"whose values become represented in corporate decision-making and how those representations influence reasoning"* because, *"Significant public decisions are made in the corporate site, creating systematic distortions in social and economic developments, and posing important moral and political questions"* (Ibid).

Other views in the critical school of CSR highlight a lack of attention to politics, vested interests and power, as well as the unchallenged assumption that CSR should be freely instrumentalized for the benefit of the firm (Vallentin, 2015). In support of this criticism numerous corporate scandals and ethical shortcomings appear to contradict the moral claims

[6] For the purpose of this thesis the field of ethics is included within the field of CSR, see appendix 10.1.

made by businesses in extensive CSR reports and statements. The Chevron-Texaco Lago Agrio oil field pollution scandal, the Enron executive's fraud scandal, Wal-Mart's international bribery scandal, the British Petroleum oil spill in the Gulf of Mexico, the Volkswagen emissions scandal, Deutsche Bank's Libor scandal, Lehman Brothers' collapse, and the Hewlett-Packard spying scandal, to mention just a few, offer a catalogue of major, sometimes criminal, corporate wrongdoing. The list is extensive and the activities that lead to such scandals show no signs of abating.

The contradiction or inconsistency between what companies say and what they do has given rise to a large body of academic theoretical and empirical work about (dis)trust of business (Kochan, 2003; Rim and Dong, 2018), decoupling (Basu and Palazzo, 2008; Boiral, 2007), hypocrisy (Brunsson, 1989) and corporate irresponsibility (Armstrong and Green, 2013; Salaiz, 2016). The debate on contradictions in CSR practices is sometimes described as limited to, and polarised, according to these tensions (Hoffmann, 2018). That is, polarisation between scholars who overlook such contradictions and, scholars who acknowledge the tensions by categorising them as gaps between action and rhetoric. Those advocating the former sometimes encourage corporations (as it is noted that such contradictions appear to be more a feature of large corporations than smaller businesses (Wickert et al., 2016)), to adopt more authenticity in their practice (Leisinger, 2007) and consistency across CSR communications (Waddock and Googins, 2011). While those in the latter group argue that striving for consistency privileges a technocratic view of organizations (Golob et al., 2013) in which individual identities (Alvesson and Willmott, 2002) and emotional capital are orientated for the benefit of the organization (Costas and Fleming, 2009; Costas and Kärreman, 2013), in similar ways that Total Quality Management (TQM) locked employees into higher performance without really benefitting employees or changing the workplace (Kerfoot and Knights, 1995). Usefully, these debates draw attention to the importance of understanding CSR practices *within* organizations as potentially both positive and negative (Lin-Hi and Müller, 2013), and as shaping both good and bad CSR outcomes.

Finally, one challenge with the critical view, as well as other managerialist discourses on CSR is the concern with motive. Even though it is difficult to determine individual motive (Christensen et al., 2013; Hoffmann, 2018), some CSR critical discourse supports a wider public discourse concerned with 'greedy' and 'narcissistic' CEOs (see for instance Jennings, 2012; Oesterle et al., 2016; O'Reilly III et al., 2014; Rhodes and Bloom, 2018), and the negative impact of large corporations on the global environment. The sometimes

dystopian nature of the critical view has contributed to a polarization in CSR scholarship. This causes some scholars to call for a radical reengagement with the contradictions in CSR (Feix and Philippe, 2018; Hoffmann, 2018) and for external interventions from marginalized actors (Gond and Nyberg, 2017). In this regard, some common ground exists on the need for more critical scholarly engagement with CSR as a vehicle for advancing progressive ideals (Gond and Nyberg, 2017), but also as a symbol of pervasive phenomena such as meaningfulness and power (Gond and Moser, 2019). CSR has, after all, not disappeared as some predicted it might (Zorn and Collins, 2007). On the contrary, it shows every sign of expanding, particularly in relation to climate change (ILO 2012). In this light reappraising CSR can, I argue, be supported by more in-depth understanding as to how CSR is actually constructed and enacted within organizations as suggested by Basu and Palazzo (2008), Gond et al. (2017), Kuhn and Deetz (2008), Lindgreen et al. (2009) and Scherer and Palazzo (2007).

2.2.6 Constitutive CSR

Although only a small body of research at present, the constitutive view of CSR is making important in-roads into our knowledge and understanding CSR (Crane and Glozer, 2016). On the one hand, scholars adopting a constitutive view have investigated the contested and sometimes polemic nature of CSR endeavours by business organizations and how these are fluidly constructed and argued through the prism of multiple discursive struggles over legitimacy in public arenas (Coupland, 2005; Joutsenvirta and Vaara, 2015; O'Connor and Ihlen, 2018). Some organization scholars in this field have focused on the complex and changing public and institutional demands facing global businesses, emphasizing the crucial role of legitimacy as *"socially and argumentatively constructed by means of considering reasons to justify certain actions, practices, or institutions and is thus present in discourses between the corporation and its relevant publics"* (Scherer and Palazzo, 2011:916). This view of CSR, not as an objective thing, but as constantly shifting and in a state of construction has highlighted the underlying political and ideological nature of these struggles (see for instance, Cantó-Milá and Lozano, 2009; Mark-Ungericht and Weiskopf, 2007; Matten and Moon, 2008; Scherer and Palazzo, 2007; Ungericht and Hirt, 2010), pointing to CSR as *"…a real-life phenomenon that involves interests, identities, and political processes"* (Joutsenvirta and Vaara, 2015:742), that enables corporations to *"shape the grounds for discussing social and political issues of the day"* (Cheney and Christensen, 2001:233).

On the other hand, a constitutive approach has drawn the attention of scholars interested in how and where CSR becomes discursively constituted, and the link with internal organizational processes (Crane, 2000; Humphreys and Brown, 2008), and more broadly CSR communication (Cheney and Christensen, 2001; Christensen et al., 2013; Schoeneborn et al., 2019). In a field that has predominantly focused on positivist philosophies (Lockett et al., 2006), the constitutive view (Christensen et al., 2013; Schoeneborn and Trittin, 2013; Schultz et al., 2013) takes an ontologically and epistemologically different approach (diverging from theories that prioritise consistency across stakeholder management and alignment across talk, standards and practice) proposing a concept of CSR based on the theory of communication as constitutive of organizations (CCO).[7] According to this theory, *"the ways organizations talk about themselves and their surroundings are not neutral undertakings, but formative activities that set up, shape, reproduce and transform organizational reality"* (Christensen et al., 2013:375). From this perspective it is not possible to distinguish *"between what the organization says and what it does. Communication and action are intimately linked in all processes of organizing, because saying is doing and because actions inevitably 'speak',"* (Christensen et al., 2013:375).

Using this paradigm, Christensen et al. argue that CSR is *"aspirational talk"* and *"therefore not a perfect reflection of organizational CSR practices"* (2013:373), but a vehicle for *"moving organizations forward towards higher standards and practices*" (2013:374), because words are consequential (Austin, 1962; Taylor and van Every, 2000). According to the constitutive view (and the formative view explained by Schoeneborn et al., 2019), CSR talk (both public and internal) is concerned with bringing into being future aspirations and hopes; it cannot therefore be understood literally. In this paradigm, hypocrisy is inevitable as endeavours to improve practices would naturally not align with desired ends. As Christensen et al. point out such an approach can only be viable *"if the organization is able to convince its stakeholders that official aspirations are taken seriously, and attempts are made to fulfil them"* (2013:378). While perhaps the assertion that 'aspirational talk' is suggestive of progress is overly optimistic, these authors focus attention on 'talk' as action and how talk constitutes practice. This debate helps break down the dichotomy of internal and external and articulates the underexplored but salient question of how CSR is internally constituted, understood and constitutive of CSR practices in contexts. This perspective is then vital to my study.

In undertaking further research into the constitutive approach to CSR Schoeneborn et al. (2019) suggest that one way forward is to regard *"talk is as a continuum in which different types of talk*

[7] CCO scholarship is based on the idea that organization emerges in and is sustained and transformed by communication. For an in-depth discussion on CCO see Putman and Nicotera (2010).

can gain actionability and bindingness, similar to the logic of Cooren (2004)" in which *"events and instances of talk become the main site where organizations emerge"* (Schoeneborn et al., 2019:22). Their point is that 'talk' offers a promising research opportunity for insights into how CSR is constituted and constitutive of CSR practices. They also highlight how the way CSR discourse deals with competing (societal, organizational, social and economic) struggles will influence CSR practices and recommend a number of theoretical approaches for further exploration. These approaches (which I discuss further in the data analysis section 3.4) include, *"theories of institutional complexity (Greenwood, Raynard, Kodeih, Micelotta and Lounsbury, 2011), orders of worth (Boltanski and Thévenot, 2006), organizational hybridity (Battilana and Dorado, 2010), or the performative[8] construction of gender roles (Butler, 1999)"* (Schoeneborn et al., 2019:21). However, whereas a constitutive approach is often centred on the organization, my interest embraces the individual, in particular how managers constantly assess and alter (consciously or not) how they should or ought to act and how they are perceived by others. This brings this review to CSR practices and CSR practitioners.

2.2.7 CSR Practices

Academic interest in understanding the internal organization, strategizing, decision making, justifying and construction of CSR has opened up empirical inquiry into individual managerial CSR action and interaction inside the firm (Basu and Palazzo, 2008), sometimes termed 'micro' level practices (Aguinis and Glavas 2012; Gond et al., 2017). Studies have suggested how accomplishing CSR can be dependent on practitioners' relational or interactional dynamics (Soderstrom and Weber, 2019), managerial ambidexterity (Dahlmann and Grosvold, 2018), issue-selling practices (Howard-Grenville, 2007; Wickert and De Bakker, 2018) and metaphorical reasoning (Carollo and Guerci, 2018). While adding to our understanding of CSR practices, these studies often consider organizational members as 'goal orientated' (as conceptualised in institutional work, see Lawrence and Suddaby, 2006) and assume a context of collaboration. Contrastingly, Kjærgaard and Morsing (2018) draw from interviews with 94 sustainability professionals to argue that individuals can be surprisingly muted even engaging in what they call ethical closure as regards organizational sustainability ambitions. Their findings underline the potential value of conducting in-depth research based on 'thick' description (Geertz, 1973) into situated contextual challenges and how issues such as culture, power and politics (see Bondy, 2008; Kok et al., 2017; Mitra and Buzzanell, 2017) influence CSR practices. Research conducted

[8] Performative approaches are discussed in sub sub-section 3.2.1.1

from sample groups constituted of one or two individuals from many different companies (see for example Carollo and Guernci, 2018 and Carrington et al., 2018), often leaves the question of how situated practices relate to outcomes, or how the same practices lead to different outcomes in different organizations (Basu and Palazzo, 2008; Wickert et al., 2016), as largely underexplored and untheorized.

Theoretically, Andersen and Skjoett-Larsen (2009) argue that firm knowledge processes, firm size and firm history all influence whether CSR practices are embedded in organizational processes. Wickert et al. (2016) also argue that firm size and structure play a significant role in shaping CSR practices and in explaining why large firms tend to 'talk' more CSR than they 'walk'. They call for more context-based inquiries to deepen understanding of context specific influences on CSR. Indeed, the context-dependent nature of qualitative studies in the CSR field is according to one review of research approaches often hidden (Crane et al., 2018:10). It is observed too that we know little about how CSR practices interact with other managerial and professional practices in the organization (Brès et al., 2019) or other organizational phenomena such as processes of socialization (Hewlin, 2003) or emotional labour (Hochschild, 1983).

The question of how CSR practitioners enact CSR practices in context is vital to understanding CSR outcomes. From a theoretical perspective some scholars have posited a number of ways in which better CSR outcomes may be supported. For example, scholars writing in the field of corporate irresponsibility highlight moral outrage as playing a significant role in identifying corporate transgressions and 'activating' key stakeholders, both internal and external (Antonetti and Maklan, 2016). Scholars in organizational studies have also argued that moral anger is a key signal of a ruptured moral code and a source of energy for *"putting right a wrong"* (Lindebaum and Gabriel, 2016:903). Scholars in the critical school point to the role of disobedience as organizational actors *"challenge, subvert and resist managerial control"* (Alakavuklar and Alamgir, 2018:33). Other theories support a view that if enough individuals work in the 'right' way this will lead to, through behavioural mechanisms, progressive improvements in responsible and ethical practices by business organizations. For instance, it has been suggested that interventionist practices to encourage *"reflexive conscientization [to] provide spaces that "activate" the performativity of language and thus lead towards behavioural change"* (Wickert and Schaefer, 2015:121) are needed. Another view holds that more self-critical approaches can come about through internal identity processes. According to Sonenshein (2005), the theory of internal social

criticism (ISC) holds potential: *"According to this theory, members of a business organization act as internal social critics when they evaluate and regulate their practices by appealing to shared understandings about the purpose and nature of their business organization"* (Ibid:475). Internal social criticism (ISC) proposes that one reason 'thick' moral standards can develop in business organizations, is because members want to avoid appearances of hypocrisy and want to develop positive moral organizational identification and *"invoke moral standards that are constitutive of their identities"* (Ibid:476).

Despite some evidence in the ethics literature to suggest positive moral identity ambitions may lead to better moral behaviours in organizations (Sonenshein, 2005), other empirical studies have also found that from an identity perspective, individuals engage in discursive strategies of 'distancing', 'deflecting' responsibility for ethical contradictions onto outsiders (Allen et al., 2015), or in behaviours that normalize and neutralize controversial issues (Ashforth and Anand, 2003; Umphress and Bingham, 2011). In their study of 26 CSR managers in a range of corporations in the U.K., Australia and the U.S., Carrington et al. (2018) also found that many CSR managers when faced with morally challenging inconsistencies between individual values and organizational practice externalized responsibility, *"rhetorically rendering themselves incapable of enacting anything other than reproductive practices"* (2018). These rare studies remind us of the irrational and messy nature of the internal organization (Mintzberg, 1994; Quinn, 1988), and highlight again the importance of further research into CSR practitioners' situated practices, in particular when faced with organizational practices that contradict the values or understandings they may hold of their role and identities.

Recognizing that business strategy is likely to influence how CSR practices are enacted and that CSR strategizing often takes place in tandem with the main business strategy (see for instance Haski-Leventhal, 2018; Porter and Kramer, 2006 and 2011; Rasche et al., 2017; Werther and Chandler, 2011), we know surprisingly little about how these two discourses interact. In one single in-depth case study, Gond et al. (2018) found that cognitive, relational and material coupling with strategy enabled adoption of CSR as a 'strategic' resource leading to explicit attention by corporate executives and inscription into strategy tools. In another case study investigation based on a longitudinal ethnographic study of an international company, Hengst et al. (2019) explored processually how sustainability managers avoided decoupling by discursively legitimizing and integrating a sustainability strategy to the main business strategy on a task by task basis. This study suggested that the proclivity of context-based factors to *allow* the integration of sustainability alongside the

main strategy was key to whether and how CSR was implemented. These in-depth case studies illuminate the research promise of considering strategy discourse when investigating CSR practices, as well as context-based dimensions that take into account localised meanings and understandings.

2.2.8 CSR Practitioners

In linking the internal dynamics of CSR to CSR outcomes, a small body of research has explored the link between individuals' personal attributes in implementing CSR. Taking a variety of epistemological approaches research in this field covers individual motivations (see for example Chin et al., 2013; Hemingway and Maclagan, 2004) and the roles and identities of practitioners (see for example Brickson 2013; Meyerson and Scully, 1995). Following this focus on the individual, a literature has emerged (often from the occupations perspective) on the relative influence of different types of roles on CSR implementation, for instance CSR professionals (Risi and Wickert, 2017; Brès et al., 2019), CSR consultants (Brès and Gond, 2014), and corporate environmental and sustainability specialists (Wright and Nyberg, 2012).

Scholars have often conceptualised CSR practitioners as social change agents or champions engaged in disrupting and transforming the organization, via the opportunity of CSR (Hoffman, 2010). Hence Meyerson and Scully refer to 'tempered radicals' (1995), Brickson (2013) to 'social activists', Haack et al. (2012) to 'protagonists', Wickert and De Bakker (2018) to 'issue-sellers' and Carollo and Guerci (2018) to 'activists in a suit'. However, scholars have also recognized that in common with middle managers in general, CSR practitioners' roles are often institutionally weak (Daudigeos, 2013; Risi and Wickert, 2017). One aspect of this weakness discussed in the literature is how CSR practitioners self-identify as institutionally separate from the rest of the organization perceiving themselves as 'insider activists' (Briscoe and Gupta, 2016), 'crusaders by conviction' and their CSR departments as 'an internal NGO'[9] (Wickert and De Bakker, 2018:58). In a study of 36 individuals in major Australian and global corporations Wright et al. (2012) discuss how in a context of competing and dominant discourses *"identity work and the construction of particular identities, or 'characters', is central to the way in which sustainability professionals manage themselves and others"* (2012:1455). Equally some authors have discussed how these roles are constructed by others as external to the organization,

[9] Non-governmental organization

suggesting they are *"outsiders because they represent ideals or agendas that are somehow at odds with the dominant culture"* (Meyerson, 2001:5), in this way suggesting that in some contexts the roles are constituted as dirty work (Ashforth and Kreiner, 1999). In contrast, Carollo and Guerci drew on a role rhetoric analysis (Fine, 1996) of 26 CSR managers in Italy to describe CSR roles in large companies as predominantly *"the motor of change"* and *"business-oriented"* (2017:632), and to conclude that *"CSR managers are more likely to foster continuity instead of change in current business practices"* (Ibid). These discussions illustrate a range of identity orientations associated with being a CSR practitioner, including 'weak-strong', 'insider-outsider' and 'tempered-crusader'.

Added to this identity collage, is the CSR practitioners' role as middle manager and strategist, and the expectation that these individuals motivate others to act favourably *"in ways that favor the organization"* (Chaffee, 1985:94), and promote organizational strategy outcomes. This is an important perspective from the view point of CSR practitioners, many of whom are also middle managers (Wickert and De Bakker, 2018) and often perceived or cast as symbolic representatives of a company's moral competence (Anthony, 1998). In this respect, less attention has been afforded in the literature to the role of CSR practitioners as middle managers (for an exception see Wright et al., 2012). Middle manager roles are also very heterogeneous including managers of all types, from senior and divisional managers, to project and functional managers (Rouleau et al., 2015; Wooldridge et al., 2008). This broadening of the role then raises questions about how these different actors appropriate CSR as CSR becomes increasingly a formal responsibility within the middle manager role (Brès et al., 2019), and how they are perceived by others, when they may not have formal, direct or exclusive access to, or control over, conventional resources or power.

Continuing with the theme of CSR practitioners as middle managers, organization scholars disagree markedly and give contradictory accounts of the degree of influence and participation middle managers offer and adopt in strategizing (Harding et al., 2014). Rouleau says that to some extent this differing view of middle managers' agency occurs because of *"a lack of coherence and consistency in describing middle manager practices"* (2015:598). Another factor is linked to the differences between what middle managers are expected to do, and what they *can* do or do *do* (Johnson et al., 2003), in context. We know for instance that middle managers are enabled and constrained by context-based role expectations (Mantere, 2008), as well as multiple, sometimes fragmented identity struggles (Sveningsson and Alvesson, 2003). While some scholars emphasize how middle managers

implement strategy through their sensemaking (Balogun, 2006), mediating (Rouleau, 2005), and informal social practices (Balogun, 2006), others have highlighted the passive or duplicitous role middle managers may play in unenthusiastic compliance (Jackall, 1988) or resistance (Mantere and Vaara, 2008; McCabe, 2011; Zoller and Fairhurst, 2007).

Another dimension to the discussion about middle managers is consideration of how middle managers are entangled in, constituted by and constitutive of the discourse of agency (Garfinkel, 1967), and accountability (including blame). In this discourse Harré (1995) says actors *"depict themselves as passive beings dictated by external influences to which they are subject (what Harré calls the 'Humean' schema), or active beings with productive capacities (what Harré calls the 'agentive' schema,*" (cited from Whittle and Mueller, 2016:21). In this light, middle managers can construct their agency as both 'active' and 'passive', depending on the object of their practice and can as part of their social practice constitute others as 'active' or 'passive'. This exploration of the CSR practitioners' roles and identities highlights an understanding of the CSR practitioner that embraces the practitioner as an individual continually constructing self in contingent and precarious ways (Harding, 2008), rather than as having a fixed or stable identity. This approach brings a sociological perspective to how a CSR practitioner's role may vary in different contexts.

In sum, this review of relevant CSR literature has highlighted how an in-depth understanding of how CSR is discursively constituted and enacted within the organization, that is how middle managers with formal CSR responsibilities discursively *do* CSR, can help generate fresh insights into CSR practices and outcomes. In particular, the critical and constitutive approaches stress challenging routine assumptions and exploring how CSR practices and practitioners are in a continuous state of contextualised becoming that extends beyond the micro-activities of individuals. I now turn to the strategy as practice literature to show how such an approach can support generation of insights into CSR strategizing.

2.3 A Strategy as Practice Approach

The aim of this section (2.3) is to argue that a strategy as practice approach, in particular one based in a 'thick' and sociologically informed understanding of practice, offers a promising approach for developing new insights into CSR practices and CSR practitioners (CSR

strategizing). I first discuss (in sub-section 2.3.1) the fundamentals of strategy as practice research which have shown how strategizing is socially embedded, takes place in messy organizational contexts, in contradictory, contested and multi-authored scenarios, where practitioners and practices are understood as entangled, not units that can be separated (Jarzabkowski et al., 2015; Vaara and Whittington, 2012). I then in the sub-section (2.3.2) focus on strategizing and discourse. Here I show how a strategy as practice approach can help with a focus on the context in which CSR is enacted. I highlight how strategy discourse is not homogenous, but often fragmented as well as contending with other discourses, becoming a focus of competing purposes and identities (Knights and Morgan, 1991). Sub-section 2.3.2.1 clarifies the approach my study takes to discursive legitimation. This is followed by an overview of praxis and practice (sub-section 2.3.3) and practice theory (sub-section 2.3.4), clarifying the sociological understandings adopted for my study. Sub-section 2.3.5 discusses how practitioners are both enabled and constrained by context arguing that this complexity as regards agency is best captured by considering practitioners as 'carriers of practice'. Sub-section 2.3.6 clarifies the understandings of identity adopted for this study. It also illustrates how identity work can give rise to the potential of multiple fragmented discourses vying for purpose and position, suggesting that how CSR practitioners construct themselves in relation to prevailing strategy discourse in their organization is a key question for my study.

2.3.1 Strategizing: 'What People Do'

Strategy is a powerful social and societal phenomenon (Balogun et al., 2014) that pervades the context in which many CSR practitioners enact CSR practices, especially as employees in large corporations. The word strategy has military and political hues originating as it does from the Greek word stratēgia meaning 'art of the general' and is often associated with winning and with historical figures such as the Chinese military leader Sun Tzu and the Italian politician and diplomat Niccolò Machiavelli (Carter et al., 2010). In the 1950s, strategy became not just the prerogative of the military and political elites, but also the "must have" in business:

> *Enterprises need strategies for much the same reasons that armies need military strategies - to give direction and purpose, to deploy resources in the most effective manner and to coordinate the decisions made by different individuals.* (Grant, 2010)

Prior to the practice turn, scholarly strategy research often referred to as strategy content research (Bourgeois, 1980), focused chiefly on strategic intention and deliberate goal setting initiatives (Chia and MacKay, 2007). As such, it was criticised by some scholars for being too 'coarse-grained' (Tsoukas, 2005:345), static, and unable to explain the complex relationship between strategy content and strategy context (Webb and Pettigrew, 1999). Others saw it as too prescriptive and void of the human being (Jarzabkowski et al., 2007). Arguing that strategy could only be explained by understanding how a particular organizational strategy emerges (Chia and MacKay, 2007), a number of scholars turned to investigating the micro-detail of strategy process. Strategy process scholars, as they became known (for example, Bower, 1970; Burgelman, 1983 and 1991; Mintzberg, 1973; Mintzberg et al., 1976; Johnson 1987; Pettigrew, 1977) recognized that top managers, while setting strategy, did not control its implementation. They drew attention to the multi-layered nature of strategy activity involving diverse groups of people and practices. In 2003, Johnson et al., and later Jarzabkowski (2005), set out the activity-based approach with the purpose of understanding the multitude of micro day-to-day activities through which strategy unfolds.

Against the background of the process school and the activity-based approach and focusing on what strategists do by emphasizing qualitative approaches, fine grained analysis, micro foundations, detailed observations and in-depth studies, strategy as practice research emerged, chiefly from the works of Hendry (2000), Hendry and Seidl (2003), Jarzabkowski (2003, 2004 and 2005), and Whittington (1996, 2002, 2003, 2004). During the initial research period, some dissatisfaction prevailed with the impact of the research on knowledge generation. For example, Carter et al. (2008) questioned the field's contribution and distinctiveness arguing that on a broad theoretical level strategy as practice appeared to mirror functionalist, performance-driven and positivist qualities of its father field, and to be replacing *"one talismanic category of strategy"* with another, that of practice, (Ibid:89). Drawing on sociological arguments of Bourdieu (2004) and Wacquant (1989), Whittington (2007) argued that strategy as practice is a social practice, something people *do*. He also emphasized that strategy as practice is fascinated with the phenomenon of strategy itself, as a discourse, and strategy as a performed profession, much like law or journalism (Whittington, 2007). Arguing that the practice turn in strategy research was incomplete, Whittington (2002, 2006) outlined a key framework of practice, practitioners and praxis that became a master framework guiding strategy as practice research.

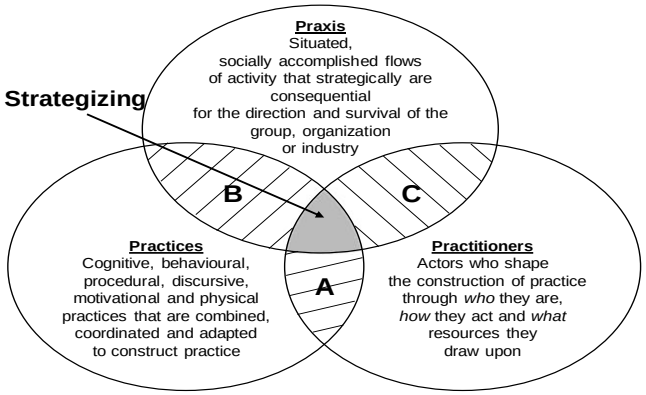

Figure 1: A conceptual framework for analysing strategy as practice

(Reproduced from Jarzabkowski et al., 2007:11)

This framework, further developed by Jarzabkowski et al. (2007) as illustrated in Figure 1, provided a template for researching strategizing by linking praxis, practices and practitioners as entangled, rather than individual units. Based on this framework and adopting a broad range of epistemological and ontological approaches, strategy as practice scholars produced a large body of empirical qualitative studies examining strategy routines, strategy cycles, strategy discourse, strategy tools and activities (Jarzabkowski et al., 2013), social practices, materials, power relationships, managers' roles and identities, and sensemaking processes (Golsorkhi et al., 2015). They established strategy not as an organizational possession, but a people-centred activity (Jarzabkowski, 2004; Johnson et al., 2007; Whittington, 2004; Whittington and Cailluet, 2008).

That said the strategy as practice framework faced challenges in its application. For instance, initial hope was that *"this 'practice turn' involves a radical reformulation of the intractable problem of agency and structure that enables us to bypass the 'micro/macro' distinction so intimately tied to the social sciences in general and to strategy research in particular"* (Chia and MacKay, 2007:217). However, Vaara and Whittington observed in 2012 that research was falling short of this expectation because of a *"legacy of micro-myopia"* (Ibid: 28). Several scholars also took the view that the theoretical underpinnings were too broad, making strategy as practice discourse and conceptualization no more than an umbrella construct (Floyd et al., 2011), and conceptually incoherent (Suddaby et al.,

2013). In contrast to those who viewed strategy as practice as too broad, Rouleau (2013) argued that the advantage of the wide multi-disciplinary nature of strategy as practice research was its potential to develop research into larger constructs such as discourse, agency and identity. Other scholars also argued for more approaches grounded in sociological theories (Chia and Rasche, 2010; Vaara and Whittington, 2012) and narrative approaches (Brown and Thompson, 2013; de La Ville and Mounoud, 2015; Fenton and Langley, 2011; Vaara et al., 2016). Some continued to point to a need to link micro and local activities more clearly to meso and macro societal-level activities (Balogun et al., 2014; Seidl and Whittington, 2014), and to understand practices and practitioners as entangled, not separate units (Jarzabkowski et al., 2015; Vaara and Whittington, 2012). In dealing with this challenge of entanglement, authors emphasized that strategizing implies the maintenance of multiple tensions simultaneously (Jarzabkowski et al., 2013; Lüscher and Lewis 2008; Quinn, 1988; Smith and Lewis, 2011), in order to build legitimacy and social agency to act (Dameron and Torset, 2014). This approach to strategizing recognizes the dynamic and turbulent nature of strategy work and foregrounds the contradictory organizational context in which strategizing occurs (Poole and Van de Ven, 1989; Smith and Tushman, 2005). Mantere and Vaara (2008) observed that the tensions characterizing strategy work are evidence of competing paradigms as described by Mumby (2004 and 2005). Taking the theme of paradigmatic struggles further, Gomez (2015) discussed from a Bourdieusian perspective the power dimensions of strategy making and how strategy is played as a type of 'social game' involving levels of *"symbolic violence exerted upon agents during strategizing processes"* (2015:195). Drawing on Pfeffer and Salancik (1978), Blom and Alvesson (2015) emphasized how different groups compete to perform strategy to leverage success:

> *…one aspect of strategizing is how different organizations, groups within organizations, individual managers and so forth compete for influence and resources […] 'Strategy' can here be viewed as a battlefield: all groups compete for the 'goodies' associated with 'strategy'.* (Blom and Alvesson, 2015:415)

In this respect, Blom and Alvesson (2015) have suggested that future research should challenge commonly held management assumptions. For example, assumptions that discussions held in meetings *really do* constitute agreements on strategy, or that those at the table during strategy meetings using strategy discourse *really are* strategists, or that middle managers *really do* influence strategy. These assumptions are equally transferable to CSR practices. That is, we must ask, do discussions held in meetings *really* constitute agreements

on CSR? Are those using CSR discourse *really* CSR practitioners? Do middle managers *really* influence CSR outcomes?

Another challenge for strategy as practice scholarship relevant for my study was discovering how agency is enabled and constrained by other dimensions. These dimensions include other individuals, the macro-institutional nature of practices, or industry practice (Burgelman et al., 2018; Vaara and Durand, 2012; Vaara and Whittington, 2012). In particular, scholars have highlighted the importance of the relational level (Cooren et al., 2015) and how strategy as practice has expanded understanding of managerial agency within a *"web of practices"* (Vaara and Whittington, 2012:286). In this 'web of practices' agency links not just to individuals but also objects (Cooren et al., 2015), and to outcomes and wider societal phenomena (Balogun et al., 2014; Jarzabkowski and Spee, 2009). Chia and Holt (2006) add to this conversation by positing strategizing by individuals as often arising from an agency based not on a deliberate building mode, but rather in how individuals dwell and cope with everyday surroundings and context.

Power and politics in organizational settings, constructs also important to CSR strategizing (Bondy, 2008), have been a central theme in strategy research since before the practice turn (Burgelman et al., 2018; Carter et al., 2008; Mueller et al., 2013). However, McCabe (2010) argued that strategy as practice research had not sufficiently engaged with power and inequality in organizations: *"scholars have not fully engaged with the more critical theorizing of strategy (e.g. Alvesson and Willmott, 1995; Hyman, 1987; Knights and McCabe, 1998; Knights and Morgan, 1990, 1991; Shrivastava, 1986)"* (McCabe, 2010:153). Taking up this challenge Mueller et al. (2013) highlighted the competing political nature of strategy work in their study of a multinational apparel company. They examined how politics was discursively controlled and constructed during strategy work, showing how top managers used politics as a socially constructed *"interpretive resource"*, as opposed to something that is *"out there"* (2013:1173). In this vein, scholars have drawn attention too to the importance of more sociological grounded research that is ontologically tall and broad (Balogun et al., 2014; Laine and Vaara, 2015; Seidl and Whittington, 2014; Vaara and Whittington, 2012). In expanding the sociological (Whittington, 2007) and the critical perspectives (McCabe, 2010), in their Special Issue on *The performativity of strategy* Cabantous et al. (2018) challenged scholars to question and extend the boundaries of strategy as practice research.

This overview of strategy as practice has highlighted how research in this field has refined scholarly understanding of the entanglement of practitioners and practices. I have argued that the strategy as practice approach with its understanding of the messy and contested context in which strategizing takes place, of practitioners and practices as socially embedded and interconnected, of agency as a 'web of practices', and of the imperative to challenge assumptions, can help further research into how CSR practitioners enact CSR alongside main business strategies.

2.3.2 Strategizing and Discourse[10]

In this sub-section, I focus on strategizing and discourse. I do that not at the exclusion of other major strategy as practice themes such as materiality, temporality or sensemaking (Golsorkhi et al., 2015), but because my research focus is concerned with the contested context in which CSR is constituted and enacted. Strategy as practice scholars and discourse scholars have highlighted how discourse is an important resource used to achieve strategic outcomes in organizations (Balogun et al., 2014; Barry and Elmes, 1997; Hardy et al., 2000; Hendry, 2000; Paroutis and Heracleous, 2013; Jarzabkowski and Sillince, 2007; Phillips et al., 2008). Balogun et al. (2014) highlight prevailing discourse approaches to strategy research as: poststructuralist approaches; critical discourse analysis; narrative perspectives; rhetoric; ethnomethodology and conversation analysis, and metaphors and analogical reasoning. Concerned with understanding the role of discourse in shaping how strategies become accepted and resisted research has spanned micro conversational studies of discursive practices in top management meetings (Samra-Fredericks, 2003), to organization level discourse studies of strategy plans (Hardy and Thomas, 2013).

While some scholars have based their investigations on understandings that assume managerial authority, rationality, standardization and control (Abdallah and Langley, 2014), others have stressed the importance of understanding the plurality and contested nature of discourses and how many discourses co-exist in organizations shaping strategy implementation in uncontrolled ways (Carter et al., 2008; Knights and Morgan, 1991; Laine and Vaara, 2007; McCabe, 2010). Following this view, there remains a vast area to research in terms of different, contesting as well as converging discourses, and their influence on practices and how strategizing is enacted in organizations (Seidl, 2007). In this field,

[10] For a discussion on discourse as theory and method see chapter 3, sub-section 3.2.1

strategy discourse (as noted with CSR discourse in sub-section 2.2.6) is not conceptualised as a homogeneous or stable concept, rather one continually in a state of becoming amongst multiple competing and fragmented discourses authored by different groups and individuals (Seidl, 2007).

In this polyphonic landscape in which different groups and individuals author, consume or reject discourse fragments, narratives as made available by top managers or authored in everyday stories, all influence how strategies are (not) appropriated and implemented in organizations (de La Ville and Mounoud, 2015). Focusing on strategy making as deriving from basic 'dwelling' and everyday 'coping' (Chia and Holt, 2006), as opposed to a deliberate building mode, de La Ville and Mounoud (2015) discuss three narrative aspects to narrative in strategizing. The first highlights the importance of chains of iterative conversations, 'sayings' that circulate producing embedded conversations which in turn produce an encompassing meta-conversation (Robichaud et al., 2004), or grand narrative (Fenton and Langley, 2011). The second perspective highlights a disposition to organize experience in a narrative form (Bruner 1990 and 1991; Czarniawska, 2002). In this perspective individuals constitute the organization, others and self-identities via narrative formulas, in particular plots and intrigues. The third view emphasizes narratives as expressions of identities (Rhodes and Brown, 2005) and how individuals *"locate themselves and others in various roles through stories they tell"* (Fenton and Langley, 2011:1180). In this view, narratives support power and knowledge claims constituting and legitimizing certain world views.

As well as being interested in different types of discourses that make strategy happen, strategy as practice is concerned with the investigation of the effects of strategy discourse as a genre (Cornut et al., 2012; Paroutis and Heracleous, 2013). Arguably, this interest in strategy discourse began with the seminal work of Knights and Morgan (1991) who examined how strategy discourse is an exercise of power and how strategy discourse (the concept, language, tools and practices associated uniquely with strategy) invokes power effects that have an impact on legitimacy and identities. Taking a social constructionist approach, Knights and Morgan argued that those in organizations make sense of the present, negotiate over meaning and create new ways of seeing and acting. Strategy discourse they found had both truth and power effects that legitimized strategists and provided *"…managers with a rationalization of their successes and failures"* (1991:262), building their identity and purpose. For Knights and Morgan, *"discourses and practices surrounding strategy […] have the effect of constituting managerial and labour subjectivities that*

enhance the productive power of organizations through subjectively 'locking' individuals and groups into their tasks and commitments" (Ibid:270).

Such close-up approaches to strategy discourse help explore the socio-political context of organizations that is power, identity, legitimacy and politics (Blom and Alvesson, 2015). In so doing, they have anchored strategy as practice research in context by suggesting that strategizing is contingent on competing interests and identities. It therefore offers an ideal starting point for exploring CSR strategizing by focusing the research on strategy discourses in the context of CSR strategizing. This approach also answers the call by Chia and Rasche (2010), Vaara and Whittington (2012), Rouleau (2013), Balogun et al. (2014) and Laine and Vaara (2015) to advance understanding of how individuals and groups, other than top managers, are enabled and constrained to participate and act strategically in the context of multiple interests, and multiple, mixed, often competing discourses.

Strategy as practice scholars have also emphasized the role of language games in strategy making (Mantere, 2013). For instance, Seidl (2007) draws attention to the autonomous nature of each different field of strategy discourse, stressing that strategy is a fragmented field of sub-discourses. Drawing from Wittgenstein (2001), Lyotard (1986[1979], 1988, 1993) and Luhmann (1995, 2003, 2005), Seidl argues that the autonomous nature of these fields means *"no transfer of strategy concepts across different discourses is possible. Instead, every single strategy discourse can merely construct its own discourse-specific concepts"* (Seidl, 2007:197). The main point he makes is that language 'games' prevent commensurability. As Lyotard states, *"A move in bridge cannot be "translated" into a move made in tennis. The same goes for phrases, which are moves in language games; one does not "translate" a mathematical proof into a narration. Translation is itself a language game"*(1993:21). In making this argument Seidl also draws on Luhmann's theory that *"Humans cannot communicate ... Only communications can communicate"* (Luhmann, 2002:169), to assert that communications reproduce themselves within the logic of an interactive, self-referential system, so they may draw on external phenomena, but only within the terms of their own logic. This idea of closed self-referencing language as games or communication systems has also been a feature of some CSR theorising (Christensen et al., 2013). In the context of CSR strategizing, Seidl's (2007) argument about the autonomous nature of discourse and language also helps furnish a theoretical understanding of the elements of competing discourses and bundles of practices relevant for my study.

2.3.2.1 Strategizing and Legitimation

As discussed in sub-section 2.2.3 the pursuit of legitimacy at organizational level via CSR discourse has been a significant focus of extant CSR research. The purpose of this sub sub-section is to clarify the approach my study takes to legitimation in the context of a practice-based study. The study of organizational legitimacy in management studies often divides into two distinct fields. First is the study by strategy scholars of how organizations manage to become perceived (intentionally or unintentionally) as legitimate according to *external* stakeholder perspectives and society at large (see Dowling and Pfeffer, 1975; Pfeffer, 1981). Second is the study of internal organizational legitimacy where internal agents agree to act in accordance with the rules of an organization because of an underlying acceptance of its legitimacy (Brown and Toyoki, 2013), or belief in the values, propriety and appropriateness as set by top managers (Neilsen and Rao, 1987; Suchman, 1995).

At the internal level, and highlighting the political nature of direction setting, Neilsen and Rao (1987) argue that the nexus between strategy and legitimacy is where meaning is created and negotiated by leaders, followers and stakeholders. Neilsen and Rao distinguish between formal text such as strategy plans (and other formal documents such as policy texts and job descriptions) that provide authoritative legitimacy, and the spoken informal organizational culture where belief systems are constructed and maintained by managers. They suggest that in the gaps between spoken and formal culture, spoken and unspoken, sit barriers to propriety and trust, that is, barriers that are perceived as a threat to legitimacy. Drawing on Hedberg and Jönsson (1977), Neilsen and Rao propose that: *"...strategies are akin to hypotheses which are tested against reality and their eventual disconfirmation lays the ground for yet another coalition to generate a strategy/myth to challenge and replace the existing myth or strategy"* (1987:523).

Both institutional theorists and sociologists argue that organizations often adopt practices, not for performance, but legitimacy effects (Suddaby et al., 2013), although scholars hold differing views on the degree of top management cognition and rationality in these legitimation processes. A key contribution in recent years from the strategy as practice field has been to show how discursive resources legitimize the actions of managers to enhance their effectiveness (Clarke et al., 2011; Dameron and Torset, 2014; Paroutis and Heracleous,

2013; Rouleau and Balogun, 2011). Drawing from Greimas (1987), Golant and Sillince (2007) explain organizational legitimacy making as narrative recursivity and the enactment of a taken-for-granted narrative structure, including the protagonizing of the organization. They explain how "*attributions of agency intrinsic to narrative are realized grammatically through modal constructions that correspond with principal modal verbs: devoir (obligation), vouloir (desire), pouvoir (competence) and savoir (know-how)"* (2007:1152), and how *"the organization emerges as an independent social actor, i.e. it is actively 'narrativized', through the plausible attribution of collective action with this set of modalities, or attitudes"* (Ibid). In their study, organizational members engaged in legitimacy making and maintenance by protagonizing, narrativizing and moralizing the organization and its leaders.

In some instances, research findings associated with internal forms of legitimation by organizational members bear commonalities with findings observed at the organizational level, underlining the increasingly polyphonic nature of legitimation processes (Glozer et al., 2019), and the mythopoeic nature of these processes. For instance, drawing from Van Leeuwen's earlier work on the *"grammar of legitimation,"* Van Leeuwen and Wodak's (1999) study of public discourses on immigration identified four constructionist approaches to building legitimation. The first, authorization references authority of tradition, law, custom, and persons in whom institutional authority is bestowed. The second, rationalization is utilitarian referencing based on taken-for-granted knowledge claims in a given context. The third, moral evaluation is legitimation generated through referencing to specific value systems. Finally, mythopoesis is legitimation conveyed through narratives, story-telling or constructing narrative structures to signal how the issue in question relates to the past or the future. In their empirical work on the discourse of a multinational merger in the public media, Vaara and Tienari (2008) argued that *"senses of legitimation are created in relation to specific discourses; discourses provide the "frames" with which people make sense of particular issues and give sense to them"* and that, *"…particular discourses enable only certain kinds of subject positions or warrant voice for particular concerns"* (2008:987).

Although they agreed clearly with Hardy et al. (2000) and Rojo and Van Dijk (1997) that actors position themselves according to available discourses and use them as resources, Vaara and Tienari (2008) took this point further by emphasizing that legitimation is not only concerned with the legitimation of specific issues or actions, but also *"…more fundamental social and societal implications"* (Ibid:986). Drawing on Van Dijk (1998) and Fairclough (2003) they stressed that discourses are ideologically driven and necessarily

involve legitimation strategies that are context-dependent and determined by local rules and taken-for-granted understandings. Using Van Leeuwen and Wodak's 1999 study and applying it to the public legitimation or de-legitimation of a multinational merger in the public media, Vaara and Tienari identified five discursive *"types of legitimation strategy – normalization, authorization, rationalization, moralization, and narrativization,"* distinguishing *"normalization as a separate category of authorization to emphasize the importance of strategies used to render specific actions or phenomena "normal" or "natural"* (2008:988).

In expanding understandings of legitimacy, Suddaby et al. (2017) proposed legitimacy as three distinct social constructs: property, process and perception. Whereas legitimacy as property focused on legitimacy as something organizations have, Suddaby et al. explain legitimacy as process and perception constructed by individuals:

> *...the notion of legitimacy as a perception has its roots in Berger and Luckmann's (1966) theory of social construction of reality. However, whereas the legitimacy-as-process stream focused on the social construction of legitimacy as primarily a macro-level process, as a process that occurs through discursive interactions at the level of organizational fields, legitimacy-as perception research focuses on the role of individuals in the process of the social construction of legitimacy. It is individuals who perceive organizations (or other social entities), render judgments about their legitimacy, and act upon these judgments, eventually producing macro-level effects (Bitektine, 2011; Hoefer & Green, 2016).* (2017:36)

In particular, Suddaby et al.'s definition stresses the fluid, temporal and distributed nature of legitimacy making, stating that *"there is a tendency to conceive processes of legitimation as heroic acts of institutional change. The literature provides multiple accounts of the legitimation through single acts of a "hypermuscular" entrepreneur"* (2017:35), adding that *"these accounts occur at the expense of a conceptualization of legitimacy as an inherently distributed effort of diverse change agents at multiple levels who engage in the day-to-day effort of legitimacy work (Johnson et al., 2006; Lawrence, Suddaby, & Leca, 2009)"* (Ibid). This view of legitimacy focusing on its recursive social construction by individuals aligns with a practice-based approach concerned with how individuals construct their reality and therefore offers a basis for understanding discursive legitimation in the context of CSR talk by CSR practitioners.

2.3.3 Understanding Practice and Praxis[11]

The purpose of this and the next sub-sections is to clarify how a sociologically grounded approach to practice supports my study. Praxis is the word adopted to refer to accumulative and sustained situated practice (as opposed to practices). The term praxis has its roots in Heidegger's *Being and Time* which identified praxis and language as a source of meaning, and Wittgenstein's location of intelligibility and understanding, not within discrete human minds, but in the flow of praxis (Shove et al., 2012:4). Schatzki summarized Wittgenstein's view as recognizing that *"both social order and individuality … result from practices"* (1996:13). Jarzabkowski defined praxis as the *"embedded construction of situated activity"* (2005:22), and also stressed that practitioners cannot be considered separately from the context in which they act. Whittington too emphasized this temporal dimension defining praxis as *"practitioners' situated doings over time"* (Whittington, 2007). It is worth noting that this temporal aspect of praxis is differently conceived, in particular Shove et al. (2012) conceptualise past and future as unifying *in the moment of practice*. There is however agreement that the situated-ness of praxis is more than interpersonal interaction in a given location. Suchman offered the following definition of situated activity:

> *First, cognitive phenomena have an essential relationship to a publicly available, collaboratively organized world of artifacts and actions, and secondly, that the significance of artifacts and actions, and the methods by which their significance is conveyed, have an essential relationship to their particular concrete circumstances.* (Suchman, 1987:50)

This definition captures the shared world in which praxis is constructed, what Shove et al. (2012) refer to as 'meaning', and the interpretative context that shapes the meaning attributed to artefacts and actions. A key question arising and under-theorised in the strategy as practice literature is how is praxis sustained or maintained over time? And why do certain practices thrive while others die? Shove et al. (for whom praxis does not exist) explain changes in practice and the adoption of new practices as well as the decline of practices by way of the connections made between competence, meaning and material (see Figure 2). Tsoukas (2018) on the other hand, argues that praxis is sustained by situated

[11] See appendix 10.1 for an explanation of the use of the word praxis in this thesis.

meanings of what a *good* life means in the situated context. To make this argument Tsoukas draws on MacIntyre's (1985) conceptualization of practices being determined by internal rewards. Shove et al. also draw on MacIntyre's concept of internal rewards explaining that:

> *…the idea is that performing a practice well, that is in terms of standards that are part and parcel of the definition of a practice itself, is of immediate, internal reward. For example, being an excellent teacher is satisfying in and of itself and not (only) because this role attracts public recognition or a good salary, these being external rather than internal rewards.* (Shove et al., 2012:75).

Tsoukas stresses that *"praxis is sustained by, and contributes to, a "certain kind of life" (MacIntyre, 1985: 190)—a life that helps shape the practitioners who engage in it and to the realization of which they contribute"* (2018:328). Tsoukas (2018) explains how internal rewards are sustained through *self-enclosure* which is made up of self-interest, that is how performing practices become the main locus of identification (Creed and Scully, 2000; Glynn 2008; Howard-Grenville et al., 2013), and self-referentialism, which is how discursively performing practices tend to generate a self-referential life world (Von Foerster, 1984; Luhmann, 2000), or a space in which individuals take control of defining their realities. In this view what practitioners do is constituted by habits of thinking, feeling, and desiring that have been formed within their practices, and *"it also involves, in principle, practitioners disclosing a certain understanding of what constitutes good action in a particular context, for the sake of a particular collective end that drives the practice"* (Tsoukas, 2018:328). This argument highlights the normativity of practice, and therefore its *intrinsic* moral dimension, and second, it suggests that *"practices contain evaluative distinctions concerning what is good or acceptable (Sayer, 2011:143; Taylor, 1991:305; Tsoukas, 2009:953)"* (Tsoukas, 2018:324). What Shove et al. (2012) and Tsoukas (2018) point to is that practices become sustained (praxis) via iterative *"circuits of satisfaction"* in which *"expertise accumulates through sequences of variously successful accomplishment"* (Shove et al., 2012:75). In a strategizing context satisfaction is accomplished via an evaluative dimension by which practitioners are not mere *"producers"*, but *"actors"* aiming *"to do the right thing"* (Tsoukas, 2018:342), as contextually constituted and socially sanctioned (Shove et al., 2012).

This discussion is helpful in researching CSR strategizing as it suggests how CSR practices become a sustained 'practice', rather than isolated practices or micro-activities.

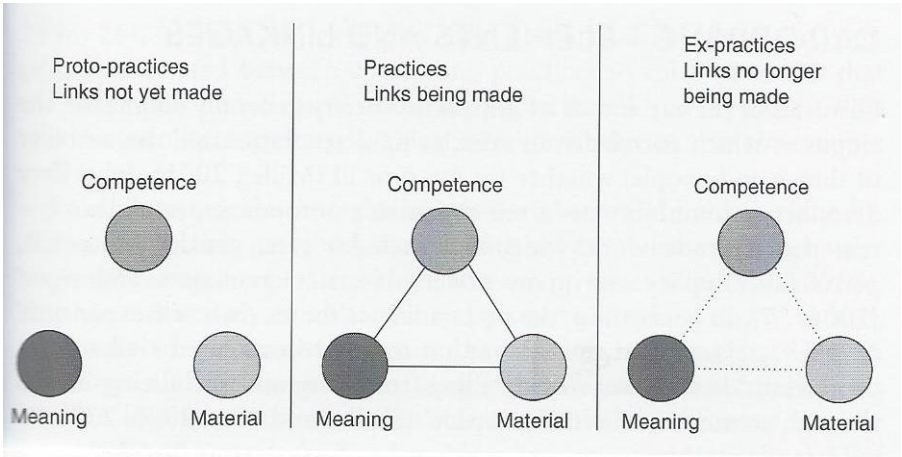

Figure 2: Proto-practices, practices and ex-practices (Reproduced from Shove et al., 2012:25)

2.3.4 Connecting Practices and Practice Theory

As discussed above (sub-section 2.3.1), strategy as practice research explains strategizing by drawing on Whittington's conceptual framework of praxis, practices and practitioners (2002 and 2006), and refocusing strategy research explicitly on human activity (Johnson et al., 2003) as influenced by a number of social theorists such as Giddens (1984), Foucault (1977) and Bourdieu (1977 and 1990). Resisting dichotomies and polarizations such as those inherent in content-versus-process or deliberate-versus-emergent debates (Jarzabkowski, 2005), strategy as practice emphasizes strategy as a flow of organizational activity that is socially embedded. Practice theory and the social science theories underpinning the practice approach, in particular Giddens (1984), emphasize the interrelated nature of strategizing across the domains of practitioner, practice and praxis. However, in developing deeper understanding of strategy as practice, empirical research has been challenged to make multiple connections (Jarzabkowski et al., 2015; Vaara and Durand, 2012) and develop an integrated framework (Dameron and Torset, 2014; Jarzabkowski et al., 2015). In strengthening this integrated approach, strategy as practice scholars have drawn from the practice turn in social sciences (Shove et al., 2012), and emphasized building conceptual coherence and complementarity between practice and process approaches (Burgelman et al., 2018). This does not mean however that differences do not persist in definitions and focus, especially given that practice theory is often

described as a family of theories (Reckwitz, 2002) that highlight how social phenomena are not the sum of individual activities, nor the outcome of the structure of society. Rather the suggestion is that *"practices are not simply points of passage between human subjects and social structure. Rather, practice is positioned centre stage"* (Shove, 2012:5).

Reckwitz (2002) described practice theories according to the 'site' to which they ascribe the social and meanings. In contemporary cultural theories, the 'site' of meanings is not centralized in the mind/body, text, or intersubjectivity, but in context-based social practices (Reckwitz, 2002; Nicolini, 2011; Schatzki, 2002 and 2005). On this basis Reckwitz (2002) defined practices as *"a routinized type of behavior which consists of several elements, interconnected to one other: forms of bodily activities, forms of mental activities, 'things' and their use, a background knowledge in the form of understanding, know-how, states of emotion and motivational knowledge"* (2002:249). These understandings, know-how, emotions and motivations are parts of the practice in which individuals are mere carriers, rather than these understandings, know-how, emotions and motives being the states of participants (Reckwitz, 2002). Schatzki (2002 and 2005) conceptualised practice (i.e. meanings, rules, teleoaffective structure - means-ends and moods), as the manifestation of the practice's objective mind, which is distinct from the mind of any participant or their sum. Schatzki (2012) suggested practices are the nexus of activity that befall people and other creatures, and that individuals are merely carriers of practices (Reckwitz, 2002; Shove et al., 2012). Schatzki also emphasized the bodily basis of all practices and how a social practice of x-ing is a *"temporally unfolding and spatially dispersed nexus of doings and sayings"* (Schatzki, 1996:89). This indicates that materials are co-produced with practices but are, nonetheless, distinct (Shove et al., 2012). From this perspective a social phenomenon is *"a bundle of practices and material arrangement"* (Schatzki 2006:1863). In sum, practices are spatial-temporal activities that are organized together through practical understanding, rules, the teleoaffective structure and general understandings that are taking place amid material arrangements.

Drawing from Reckwitz's definition of practices (2002), Shove et al. conceptualise practices as a recognizable *"conjunction of elements"* which configure as an entity, and which require performing and reproducing to be sustained over time (2012:7). In order to understand the *"trajectories of practices-as-entities"* (Ibid: 11), and the process of change in these practices, these authors define elements as meaning, material, and competences (see Figure 2). By *"collapsing what Reckwitz describes as mental activities, emotion and motivational knowledge into the one broad element of 'meaning'* Shove et al., adopt

'meaning' as *"a term we use to represent the social and symbolic significance of participation at any one moment"* (Ibid:23). In so doing meaning is not the emphasis on ongoing ends of projects, but instead *a moment* in which the past and future unite in the performance of practice and so meaning is *"an element of practice, not something that stands outside or that figures as a motivating or driving force*" (Ibid:24).

These conceptualizations of practice offered by Reckwitz (2002), Schatzki (1996) and Shove et al. (2012) enrich our understanding of the philosophical entanglements of practice. Taking on board complementary approaches to practices, strategy as practice has moved beyond conceptualizing strategy practices as a set of tools and resources, including discursive practices, texts, meetings, routines, workshops as well as technology tools (Hodgkinson et al., 2006; Jarzabkowski et al., 2013). Realizing the danger in just focusing on the visible, deliberate action and what people *do* (Tsoukas, 2015), research has extended understandings of the socio-material perspective (Jarzabkowski and Pinch, 2013), the emotional dimension (Liu and Maitlis, 2014), the temporal dimension (Ma and Seidl, 2018), and identity perspectives (Vargha, 2018). For instance, by using meetings as a unit of analysis Liu and Maitlis (2014) linked different strategic discourses and accompanying emotions to a variety of outcomes in strategic planning and development. They take understanding beyond the realm of individual action and individual knowledge by arguing that individual emotion shapes wider relational dynamics and the strategic process by acting as a congenial or degenerative force on the strategizing process. For my study, aimed at an in-depth exploration to gather insights into the internal dynamics of CSR practices I adopt this 'thick' sociological approach to practices as defined by Reckwitz (2002), also incorporating Schatzki's notion of rules and Shove et al.'s emphasis on practice as a *"conjunction of elements"* (2012:7) at any moment in time.

2.3.5 Practitioners as 'Carriers of Practice'

In this sub-section I discuss how practitioners' agency simultaneously influences and and is influenced by their context, and propose the concept of practitioners as 'carriers of practice' as the basis for this study. Initially, much strategy as practice research focused on strategists as individuals, and as such it was sometimes criticised for micro-individualism. While shedding light on micro-linguistic capabilities, attributes and attitudes of individual practitioners, a narrow research focus did not explain strategizing as a multi-authored, distributed and shared process (Jarzabkowski, 2005; Vaara and Durand, 2012) linked to, and

shaped by broader social phenomena. At the heart of discussions about the influence of middle managers in strategy making often sits the question of individual agency and how agency is enabled or constrained (Mantere, 2008).

Jarzabkowski states that, *"agency means to have choices and to be able to effect some action towards those choices"* (2005:29). She argues that three dimensions of agency inform the view of the strategists. First, is the iterative dimension in which actors reproduce past action without conscious thought, as outlined in theories such as structuration (Giddens 1979 and 1984), and habitus (Bourdieu 1977 and 1990). She argues, however, that iterations are known moves that the strategist uses heuristically to enable strategy and to stabilize strategy. This view of agency connects to the argument put by Chia and Holt (2006), that *"the dominant 'building' mode of strategizing that configures actors (whether individual or organizational) as distinct entities deliberately engaging in purposeful strategic activities derives from a more basic 'dwelling' mode in which strategy emerges non-deliberately through everyday practical coping"* (2006:635). Second, Jarzabkowski (2005) describes a projective dimension to agency. Here, the strategist is purposefully and deterministically projecting, driving, persuading, leading and emboldening the organization towards a goal-orientated future. The third dimension emphasized by Jarzabkowski (2005) which she argues is the dimension most significant to strategy as practice research, is that of practical evaluative agency.

This dimension of practical evaluative agency is concerned with phronesis, or the ability to assess conflicting, ambiguous and uncertain variables and make choices about which direction to take, as Tsoukas (2018) also stressed in his discussion of phronesis, which is the *right* direction to take. While emphasizing the individual, this perspective recognizes that strategists have to adapt and manipulate circumstances within existing structures and environmental conditions (Child, 1997) and they are therefore also both enabled and constrained. Mantere (2008) highlighted the importance of role expectations by top managers on middle managers as a constraint on middle manager agency, as well as a point of reciprocity. This balancing of agency and situated constraints is what Herepath (2014) highlights as individuals who are both *"constrained and yet free"* (Archer, 1995:1). In this respect, my study adopts an understanding of practitioners as 'carriers of practice' as set out by Shove et al. (2012) and Reckwitz (2002). This conceptualization offers optimal opportunity for generating understandings of practices by individuals in a socially embedded context.

2.3.6 Practitioners and Identities

Agency and identities are intimately connected. In this sub-section I clarify the understanding of identities adopted for this study. The academic scholarship on identities is vast spanning many decades. Though reviewing these tomes of scholarly debate is not within the scope of this study, it is important to discuss and situate identity as a construct, in particular as pertaining to CSR practitioners. The first observation to note is that the treatment of identity as regards CSR practitioners in the CSR literature has tended toward an objectivist view, in which individuals have an identity as 'activists', and therefore identity as a socially constructed construct has been underexplored (for exceptions see Carollo and Guerci, 2018, and Wright et al., 2012). Given my focus on discourse in this study, I adopt a view of self-identities as subjectively *"construed through discourse and other symbolic means"* (Brown, 2015:21), and constituted as *"the effect of the interaction between human agency and organizational discourses rather than in the determination of one to the other"* (Bergström and Knights, 2006:351). Such identities are also a *"reflexively understood version of one's self"* (Alvesson and Robertson, 2016:10), and intimately linked to insecurities and uncertainty as regards how others judge, evaluate or validate the self (Knights and Clarke, 2014). In discussing Hall (1996), Harding foregrounds Hall's emphasis on identities as *"constructed through, and not outside, difference, and as a consequence are inherently unstable, divided and haunted by the liminal presence of the "Others" from whom the self seeks to be distinguished"* (2008:44).

For Brown the self is often constructed in answer to questions such as: *"'how shall I relate to others?'; 'what shall I strive to become?'; and 'how will I make the basic decisions required to guide my life?'*," (Brown, 2015:21). In reviewing decades of research in management studies, and in particular organization studies literature, Brown highlights the instability of self-identity construction in the organizational context:

> *Much research on identities (cf. Kuhn, 2006) takes as its point of origin the 'reflexive modernization' thesis (i.e. that traditional identity certainties associated with class, family, markets and society generally have diminished forcing people to accept responsibilities which engender anxieties that are combatted through the formulation of identity-narratives (Beck, 1992; Giddens, 1991). Organizational*

> *participants face multiple insecurities – existential, social, economic and psychological – which mean that 'Lives are by definition precarious' (Butler, 2009, p.25) and identities 'imperilled, menaced and fragile' (Brown & Coupland, 2015, p.1316; Collinson, 2003). Identities, then, are most often regarded as temporary 'fixes' concocted by individuals to impose a degree of coherence in the face of assorted vulnerabilities; they are situational, sociologically and psychologically complex, rarely consistent and generally fluid (Kärreman & Alvesson, 2001).* (Brown, 2019:8)

Many identity scholars agree that organizations are for their members social sites *"for realizing the project of the self"* (Grey, 1994:482), and that *"identities are constituted within organizationally based discursive regimes which offer positions, or epistemological spaces, for individuals and groups to occupy"* (Clarke et al., 2009:325). In these social spaces and sites *"people are continuously engaged in forming, repairing, maintaining, strengthening or revising the constructions that are productive of a precarious sense of coherence and distinctiveness*" (Alvesson and Willmott, 2002:626), and in striving *"for comfort, meaning and integration and some correspondence between a self-definition and work situation"* (Sveningsson and Alvesson, 2003:1188) in the organizational context. In so doing, individuals engage in a complex landscape of what has often been referred to as 'identity work', constructing self and the work setting (including other actors) in preferred and contingent ways.

The various understandings of 'identity work' have been explained by Brown, in terms of five overarching themes, *"'agency and structure', 'stability and fluidity', 'coherence and fragmentation', 'positive and negative identities', and 'authenticity and identities',"* (2015:21). These themes bring together notions of choice, authenticity, stability, coherence and positivity that had made up different areas in the identity literature. Understanding self-identities *and* identity work as instrumental in shaping a range of organizational processes and outcomes (Coupland and Brown, 2012:2), including preferred life worlds individuals desire (as discussed in sub-section 2.3.3), helps underscore the significance of identities in organizational processes and practices. For instance, Alvesson and Willmott (2002) note how organizational level control mechanisms, what they call 'identity regulation', are enacted by individuals as part of their identity work, particularly in large organizations, via *"self-positioning of employees within managerially inspired discourses about work and organization"* (2002:620). They point out that intentional modelling of discourses to encourage commitment amongst employees can produce cynicism, but in the absence of

counter-discourses, can also lead to instrumental compliance and *"serial identification with corporate values"* (Ibid:622).

According to Brown (2015) *"positive identities are commonly defined as those that are valuable, good or beneficial (Dutton et al., 2010), promote favourable self-views (Roberts et al., 2009) and are associated with characteristics such as competence, resilience and transcendence (Kreiner and Sheep, 2009)"* (2015:28). Constructing a 'moral self' can be viewed as one important aspect of positive identity work born out of anxieties about how we are seen and judged by others in society (Knights and Clarke, 2014; Tugendhat, 1993; Weaver, 2006), or a desire to establish positive identity pathways that mitigate negative ones (Brown and Lewis, 2011; Dutton et al., 2010). In this regard, Weaver (2006), like Sonenshein (2005), has argued that organizations can develop the moral agency of employees (in general) by embedding social discourse that shapes employees' moral self-identities, a sort of moral strategizing. This sort of moral strategizing however assumes we take for granted a level of virtuous cooperation, whereby managers and other organizational groups cooperate in 'virtuous' activity, an assumption that cannot always be certain (Tsoukas, 2018). Weaver's theory also builds on the idea of positive organizational identity association and assumes organization members will desire to identify with *the organization*. Dutton et al. explain *"Organizational identification is the degree to which a member defines him- or herself by the same attributes that he or she believes define the organization"* (1994:293). Weaver's point is that individuals seek moral action based on identity ambitions because *"…being a moral agent in terms of having a moral identity, i.e. having one's self-concept centrally oriented toward a collection of moral traits that both define who one is and yield tendencies toward paradigmatically moral action"* (Weaver, 2006:345).

The understanding of identities as socially constructed from discourses has drawn the attention of scholars exploring how middle managers (dis)engage with strategizing (Dameron and Torset, 2014; Dick and Collings, 2014; Laine and Vaara, 2007; Mantere and Vaara, 2008). This literature has highlighted how identity work by middle managers and other organizational groups can often lie at the heart of struggles to (not) implement strategy. Laine and Vaara (2007) for instance demonstrated how middle managers created their own strategy discourse to protect their identity and differentiate themselves from top managers, and how project engineers distanced themselves from management strategy talk as a means of protecting their identity as engineers. In this illuminating case one set of middle managers worked on their own strategies in secrecy. Although case specific, their

study suggested middle managers, though not usually formally in control of discursive frames, create strategy discourses (even if it is one of negation), giving rise to the potential of multiple strategy discourses vying for purpose and position. Laine and Vaara (2007) and Knights and Morgan (1991) suggest, all groups have needs for rationalization, identity, security and order and might conceptualize and activate their agency by positioning themselves in relation to strategy discourse. Examining middle managers from an identities perspective and drawing on Courpasson et al.'s 2012 study, Harding et al. 2014 concluded:

> *The middle managerial subject is limited in the ways it can think, speak and act; middle managers are therefore controlled by the very discourse that gives them the power to exercise control over others. Middle managers are therefore both controllers and controlled. And at the same time middle managers (speaking within and through the critical/managerialist and critical/resistant discourse) in some ways resist those controls so are resisters. Furthermore, as controllers they face resistance from staff, so are resisted.* (2014:1231)

These observations from both organization and strategy as practice scholars illustrate the plasticity and complexity of middle manager identities and how identity work is anything but fixed (Brown, 2015 and 2019; Harding et al., 2014). Denis et al. (2007) have hypothesized that strategists position themselves in a way that best represents the values at the heart of the organization's identity (2007:208). This idea suggests that in order to act strategically, organizational actors not at the centre of an organization, but implementing new practices, may position their self-identity with a (perceived) core identity. These debates raise the question of how CSR practitioners construct the self in relation to strategy discourses, or whether, the existence of CSR discourse creates an opportunity, or indeed imperative, for CSR practitioners to develop parallel or divergent discourses. In turn, the question arises as to how strategy and CSR discourses effect practitioners' identities and roles, and how CSR practices are constituted by and constitutive of practitioners according to the identities and roles they assume.

2.4 Research Questions

Following this literature review, this study questions how the competing, fluid, contested and messy nature of the strategy and CSR discourses influence CSR strategizing and practices within the organization. To explore this phenomenon, I ask first:

1. *How do strategy and CSR discourses enable and constrain appropriation of CSR by CSR practitioners?*

Second, how strategy discourse and CSR discourse compete for legitimacy would, as the literature review has suggested, be contextually bound by local rules, know-how and taken-for-granted understandings, which would have consequences for organizing. Therefore, my next question is:

2. *How do strategy and CSR discourses facilitate or impede the implementation and enactment of CSR strategies and the stabilization of a CSR practice?*

And third, the literature review has also illustrated how strategy discourse has subjective implications for the roles, identities and agency of practitioners and how practitioners are 'carriers of practice'. In this context I ask:

3. *How do strategy and CSR discourses interface with the roles, identities and agency of practitioners involved in CSR practice?*

2.5 Conclusion

This review of the literature has demonstrated that a strategy as practice research approach offers the opportunity to conduct research into CSR strategizing from an underexplored and 'thick' sociological practice perspective. This opens up the possibility of generating new insight into CSR practices and implications on outcomes. In this regard, the research questions developed from the literature review *"offer a starting point for new answers"* and explanations (Alvesson and Sandberg, 2013:63).

By exploring how strategy and CSR discourses enable or constrain CSR strategizing, the literature review has situated this study within a bigger societal conversation in strategic management and organization studies about multiple competing discourses and strategizing in plural and complex organizations. The study therefore holds promise in terms of creating new knowledge by creating new insights into how people exist and flourish in organizations that are in constant states of becoming. This is important for three reasons. First, as Langley (2015) reminds us, knowledge accumulation is not based *"on the ideal of a single truth but on the search for increasingly insightful interpretations or representations of strategy viewed as a social practice"* (2015:116). Second, creating conceptual knowledge holds the greatest potential for generating practical relevance (Splitter and Seidl, 2015). And third, management literature and the media are often criticised for reproducing and reinforcing popular myths regarding heroism of top managers, CEOs and strategy. A focus on the interactive and socially embedded production and maintenance of practice in organizations by key, but often less visible, organizational actors offers the opportunity to critique prevailing approaches (Laine and Vaara, 2015), and develop innovative thought about how we regard organizations.

3: Methodology

> *Field work, then, involves the disciplined study of what the world is like to people who have learned to see hear, think and act, in ways that are different.*
> (Spradley, 1979:3)

3.1 Introduction

The aim of this chapter is to provide a detailed overview of the research approach adopted to explore CSR strategizing by CSR practitioners as discussed theoretically in chapter 2. To achieve this aim, I discuss the theoretical perspectives and practical issues that steered my choice of research approach for addressing my three research questions outlined in sub-section 2.4. This chapter sets out the ontological and epistemological perspectives I chose to develop my research methodology. Consistent with my overall approach to reach beyond the surface by entering the *'back regions'* of the organization (Goffman, 1959), I adopted a qualitative approach as qualitative approaches are best suited to the social sciences and inquiry into social activity such as discourses (Flick, 2007). Qualitative research approaches are also best suited for research concerned with participants' perceptions and experiences (Lincoln and Guba, 1985), and for generating *'thick descriptions'* (Geertz, 1973) focused *"on understanding culture qua meaning as enacted through cultural practices, text, and talk"* (Mumby, 2011:1156). Such an approach is consistent with strategy as practice and practice studies that have drawn strongly from qualitative methods to explore micro settings of strategizing and dynamic relationships across individual action, practices and context. My research favoured a single case study modality as this level of study offered the intensity needed to explore broader organizational discourses as they are constituted by individuals in the workplace (Sveningsson and Alvesson, 2003), and an opportunity to apply *"existing approaches with an uncommon degree of rigor and insight"* (Crane et al., 2018). The first section (3.2) discusses the philosophical debates associated with my methodological choice of interpretive research and discursive enquiry. The second section (3.3) details the research design and case study specifications. The next section (3.4) explains my data analysis method and the process of reflexivity (section 3.5) as I experienced it throughout the research project.

3.2 Interpretive Research

The idea for this research study did not originate from a hypothesis, but rather from a social phenomenon of interest. Therefore, this study has been grounded in an interpretivist paradigm: the idea that the social world is socially constructed, that it is *"an emergent social process which is created by the individuals concerned"* (Burrell and Morgan, 1979:28). A paradigm as a worldview offers a way of thinking and making sense of the complexities of the real world, which helps with developing understanding of *"what is important, legitimate and reasonable"* (Patton, 2002:69). Since this research is located in the interpretivist paradigm, which originated partly in phenomenology, its philosophical and ontological view is subjective and nominalist, regarding facts and reality as human creations wherein *"the labels and names we attach to experiences and events are crucial"* (Easterby-Smith et al., 2012:21). Epistemologically, the study is therefore committed to a view of knowledge creation not through a positivist tradition of external objective truth, but through the exploration of understandings created by individuals in context and the insights these offer as regards their reality (Mumby, 2011).

Although both strategy and CSR research has tended to focus on positivist philosophies as discussed in chapter 2, this trend has changed more recently as academic curiosity has heightened into the significance of *"doings and sayings"* (Schatzki, 1996:89) as windows through which researchers can understand how meaning is constituted in practice, and in relation to topics such as identity and subjectivity. Increasingly, the socially constructed nature of human reality has been acknowledged as significant and legitimate modes of inquiry for knowledge creation in different paradigms (Burrell and Morgan, 1979). Under such approaches, reality is considered to be socially constructed (Burr, 2003) and *"all human knowledge is developed, transmitted, and maintained in social situations"* (Berger and Luckmann 1966:3). In this view, sometimes termed perspectivism (Schwandt, 2003), there are multiple realities that are constructed by human beings. The role of the researcher is not independent of, or somehow separate from, the phenomena under research. Rather knowledge is subjectively attained, constructed and is value laden (Lincoln and Guba 1985).

Adopting a social constructionist approach for this research is consistent with practice-based theories focusing on the constitution of social life through language, discourses and other non-verbal activities (Schatzki 1996). In this view meanings are not fixed entities that can be discovered and that exist independent of the researcher. Rather, *"social*

constructionist views share with philosophical hermeneutics the broad critique of meaning as an object, and they display an affinity with the notion of the coming into being of meaning" (Schwandt, 2003:307). Disagreement amongst constructionist scholars exists as regards the objectivity of meanings from interpretation: Some suggest some truth to interpretation is conceived during practices of interpretation; while others argue there is no truth to interpretation (Schwandt, 2003). From this perspective of the sort of knowledge created from this study, I followed a commitment to generate two types of insights: conceptual insights that bring new knowledge clarifying and explaining boundaries and the nature of concepts that are, in many circumstances taken-for-granted; and, insights about the context that, though unlikely to be generalizable, offer an interesting perspective.

Researchers in the interpretivist paradigm have often been described as *bricoleurs*. One definition of a bricoleur is a *"Jack of all trades or a kind of professional do-it-yourself person"* (Lévi-Strauss, 1996:17). Denzin and Lincoln explain that *"The interpretive bricoleur produces a bricolage – that is, a pieced-together set of representations that are fitted to the specifics of a complex situation"* (2003:5). Researchers in this tradition piece together whatever strategies, methods, tools or empirical materials are available, and *"the choices as to which interpretive practices to employ are not necessarily set in advance"* (Ibid: 6). The *"choices of research practices depends upon the questions that are asked, and the questions depend on the context"* (Nelson et al., 1992:2), and what is practically feasible for the researcher to do in the setting. In developing representations researchers as *bricoleurs* may draw on many different traditions and use a variety of concepts such as montage or quilt making. These I explain in sub-section 3.4.2.

3.2.1 Discourse as Theory and Method

The literature review illustrates the rich epistemological and ontological potential of taking a discourse approach to researching CSR talk as constitutive of CSR strategizing. Moreover, discourse approaches have been highlighted as one of the 'overlooked' approaches in qualitative research in the business and society field (Crane et al., 2018). The purpose of this sub-section is to situate the discourse approach I take for this study: as regards discourse in management studies (sub sub-section 3.2.1.1); organizational discourse as a genre (sub sub-section 3.2.1.2); and, to detail my approach to discourse enquiry (sub sub-section 3.2.1.3).

3.2.1.1 Discourse in Management Studies

The linguistic turn in the sciences led to a widening of research enquiry not just in organization studies, but sociology, social psychology, anthropology and communication theory (Alvesson and Kärreman, 2000b). Scholars researching in these areas shared a common realization *"that the proper understanding of societies, social institutions, identities, and even cultures may be viewed as discursively constructed ensembles of texts"* (Ibid: 137). Crucially, many of these scholars departed from the dominant view that language represented reality. Instead they asserted a view that *"language is understood as a range of activities in which we express and realize a certain way of being in the world"* (Schwandt, 2003:307), and that language is *"what allows us to have the world we have. Language makes possible the disclosure of the human world"* (Taylor, 1995: p.ix). Consequently, they asserted that people use language primarily to accomplish things, and that the variety of means employed to achieve these accomplishments were underestimated in conventional research (Potter and Wetherell, 1987).

This approach to language going beyond words as literal representations of truth was pioneered by scholars such as Austin (1962), Bergmann (1964) and Rorty (1967). Austin's (1962) theory of performative speech published in the book, *How to Do Things with Words*, holds that not all speech acts are utterances of true or false sentences, and that a 'constative' speech act is an utterance *"in which to say something is to do something; or in which by saying something we are doing something"* (1962:12). Searle (1995 and 2008) developed this view further by arguing that as discursive constructions language offers opportunities to enact and experience preferred and desired social realities. Searle emphasizes *"the significance of language for the very existence of human social reality"* (Searle, 2008:444). He explains this emphasis on language by explaining how beliefs, for instance:

> *...fit the world with what we can call the "mind-to-world" direction of fit (the state in the mind is supposed to represent how things are in the world), but desires and intentions are not supposed to represent how things are, but rather how we would like them to be or how we intend to make them be and we may say therefore that they have the "world-to-mind" direction of fit (the state of the world is supposed to come to match how things are represented in the mind).* (2008: 445)

The performative[12] nature of talk and text emphasized by Austin (1962) and Searle (1995 and 2008) provides the foundation for many discourse approaches to research in management studies. This approach helps explore taken-for-granted assumptions and between the lines speech acts indicative of actors' socially embedded practices. In so doing, these studies reject the notion that rationality underpins human action and recognize the complexity and ambiguity of everyday situations and the role managers play as agents in shaping power and protecting interests (Fournier and Grey, 2000). In this respect, discourse research opened enquiry into power and structures by offering insight into socially embedded discursive interactions because as Grant et al. state: *"our everyday attitudes and behaviour, along with our perceptions of what we take to be reality, are shaped by the discursive practices and interactions that we are involved in and are exposed to"* (2001:7). The relationship between discourse and power has become a key feature of discourse approaches with scholars emphasizing different conceptions of power. While Fairclough stressed how discursive practices reproduce and transform *"existing social and power relations"* (1995b:77), others have cautioned in replicating domination models of power asserting that these do *"little to conceive of the relations among discourse, ideology and power as a contested terrain characterized by contradiction, resistance and struggle over (relatively) contingent meaning structures"* (Mumby, 2004:242). Following this view, firms' social contracts with employees are less likely to be governed by ideas of compliance, and more by concepts of attractiveness, trustworthiness and engagement (Yalabik et al., 2013), as well as opportunities for individual discretion (Fleming and Jones, 2013; May, 1975), creativity (Brammer et al., 2015) and meaningfulness (Glavas, 2011), all requiring a different sensitivity from the discourse researcher.

For these reasons discourse research as both theory and method is often associated with critical management studies. The relevance to this study of a critical perspective is that it embraces the fact that *"management is enmeshed with social and political power"* (Fournier and Grey, 2000:9). However, while Burrell and Morgan (1979) emphasize the political and emancipatory intentions of critical scholarship,[13] Fairclough (2009) argued that

[12] For a discussion on the full range of performative approaches see Cabantous et al. (2018). Also, critical management scholars have developed the concept of 'critical performativity', a particular form of post-modern critical management studies (see for instance Cabantous et al. 2016).

[13] Burrell and Morgan identify the radical humanist paradigm as, *"defined by its concern to develop sociology of radical change from a subjectivist standpoint. Its approach to social science has much in common with that of the interpretive paradigm, in that it views the social world from a perspective which tends to be nominalist, anti-positivist, voluntarist and ideographic. However, its frame of reference is committed to a view of society which emphasises the importance of overthrowing or transcending the limitations of existing social arrangements"* (1979:32).

'*critical'* as well as implying addressing social 'wrongs', also implies being able to *critique* and demonstrate the interconnectedness of things (Fairclough, 1995a:39). In agreement with this latter emphasis, this study shares the view expressed by Fournier and Grey (2000) that 'critical' refers to exploring the unsaid or the taken-for-granted. In this light, this study is also sensitive to, but not committed to, postmodernist concerns for destabilizing subject and text. One informative work, though not without its critics, is that of Lyotard (1986) who emphasized a focus on context, prevailing narratives and disturbances as the focus of dialogue between actors, as opposed to harmonisation (Alvesson and Sköldberg, 2009).

3.2.1.2 Discourse in Organization Studies

> *…discourse constitutes social practice and is at the same time constituted by it*
> (Van Leeuwen and Wodak, 1999:92)

From the mid-1990s, studies of organizational discourse began to feature frequently in management and organizational journals. A key reason for the growth in organizational discourse analyses was the *"widespread use of broad, non-specific definitions and a bewildering array of methods, approaches and perspectives"* (Grant et al., 2004:1), that enabled researchers in uncovering organizational concerns hitherto under-examined and little understood. This same variation underpins the popularity of discourse analysis amongst strategy as practice researchers (Rouleau, 2013). The variation in approaches characterising organizational discourse studies derives from the multitude of disciplines that underpin discourse analysis: sociology, sociopsychology, anthropology, linguistics, philosophy, communications and literary-based studies (Grant et al., 2004). While some scholars take issue with the wide variation in organizational discourse research (Van Dijk, 1997), others have embraced it, arguing that a plurivocal project approach *"…is the best way of ensuring that the field makes a meaningful contribution to the study of organizations"* (Grant et al., 2004:2).

The breadth of understandings in the field of discourse studies in organizations render definitions of organizational discourse somewhat problematic. Citing several authors, Grant et al. (2004:3) state that the term 'organizational discourse' refers to:

> *The structured collections of texts embodied in the practices of talking and writing (as well as a wide variety of visual representations and cultural artefacts) that bring organizationally related objects into being as these texts are produced, disseminated and consumed.* (Grant et al., 1998; Parker, 1992; Phillips and Hardy, 2002)

As social constructionists, organizational discourse scholars argue, for the most part, that:

> *Organizations exist in so far as their members create them through discourse. This is not to claim that organizations are 'nothing but' discourse, but rather that discourse is the principal means by which organization members create a coherent social reality that frames their sense of who they are.* (Mumby and Clair, 1997:181)

Therefore, drawing from Austin (1962) and Searle (1995 and 2008) discursive practices *"do not just describe things; they do things"* (Potter and Wetherell, 1987:6). On a broad level, text (as described by Grant et al., 2004:3) work upon each other and are related to each other (Phillips and Hardy, 2002), in dynamic ways that help make history and contribute to wider processes of change (Fairclough, 1992). Socially, text also forms practices and identities as discourse determines what can be said, by whom, and when:

> *[Discourse] governs the way that a topic can be meaningfully talked about and reasoned about. It also influences how ideas are put into practice and used to regulate the conduct of others. Just as discourse 'rules in' certain ways of talking about a topic, defining an acceptable and intelligible way to talk, write or conduct oneself, so also by definition, it 'rules out', limits and restricts other ways of talking, of conducting ourselves in relation to the topic or constructing knowledge about it.* (Hall, 2001:72)

Despite the linguistic turn in the social sciences, management scholars have been criticised for a proclivity to focus on language as a representation of reality (Alvesson and Kärreman, 2000a). However, moving beyond the discourse of language in use to address discourse in a wider, societal sense has proved challenging, especially in empirical research (Carter, 2013). This struggle is illustrated in part by the debate on distinctions between discourse

with a small *d* and Discourse with a capital *D*. Kuhn and Putnam (2014) suggest that capital *D* discourses are grand and mega discourses which frame organizational realities or universal connections to institutional patterns, and, little *d* discourse as concerning micro study of language (2014:417). They also distinguish meso-discourse as being *"relatively sensitive to language use in context but interested in broader patterns that go beyond the details of the text"* (2014:417). While Alvesson and Kärreman (2000b) advocate separating these concepts to improve research discipline in their treatment, Mumby (2011) argues such a step would be wholly regressive, ignoring the complexity of the impact one has on the other. In parallel, strategy as practice scholars argue it is not *"micro-isolationism"* (Seidl and Whittington, 2014:1408) that is required, but rather, broader conceptualizations that clearly link local with larger social phenomena (Seidl and Whittington, 2014:1412). Kuhn and Putnam (2014) agree arguing that it is chains of discourse that produce transformations as a key assumption in this field is that *"organizational realities are always contingent on the surrounding social field, such that understanding organizations and organizing practice requires analysis of the ways discourse shapes situated identities and actions"* (2014:417).

On the link between the text and material object Mumby (2011) stresses that they do not exist independently or in a static state. For Mumby the work of the organizational discourse researcher is therefore to interrogate the relationship between the text and the material. Further, this relationship is dynamic and under constant negotiation, as he explains:

> *In this sense, culture and meaning do not exist in social actors' heads as cognitive structures (...), but rather get played out in the dynamics of everyday discourses, practices, rituals, and so forth. Discourses, then, are not to be studied to gain access to mental processes, but as formations of social phenomena*. (2011:1158)

This broad, dynamic approach to discourse in organizations is the discourse approach my research study adopts. The advantages of this conceptually broad approach are threefold: it provides an inbuilt alarm system against individualism and miso-centricity; it is context sensitive and context expanding; and, it embraces multiple discourses. The disadvantages must also be noted. First, the lack of agreement on how to bridge levels of discourse raises concerns for some scholars as to the work's coherence, as the relationships across discursive elements are seldom defined (Fairclough, 2005). And, second, researchers may overlook material elements leading to an emphasis on the symbolic (Kuhn and Putnam, 2014).

3.2.1.3 Discourse Enquiry

This sub sub-section outlines my approach to discourse enquiry. Discourse enquiry is very varied and complex, with as many types of discourse approaches as there are philosophical and social fields and methodological perspectives (Burman and Parker, 1993).[14] The focus of my research on how strategy and CSR discourses enable and constrain CSR strategizing in practice meant I sought a broad and sensitive understanding of discourse research that accorded with the following criteria. First, it needed to be coherent with my broad approach to discourse in organizations discussed above (in sub sub-section 3.2.1.2), helping avoid individualism and miso-centricity. This ruled out fine-grained approaches to conversation or linguistic analysis. Second, it needed to be commensurate with a social constructionist epistemology. And third, it needed to offer sufficient flexibility to avoid the type of "micro-isolationism" described by Seidl and Whittington (2014:1408) and maintain connectivity with broader conceptualizations linking the local with larger social phenomena (Mumby, 2011; Seidl and Whittington, 2014:1412). For this reason, I did not settle on any specific approach at the outset of my study, as this would not have been commensurate with my more nominalist-relativist ontological approach and would have risked entering the research setting imposing specific, predetermined or narrow perspectives.

Offering a clear definition of discourse analytic research is difficult as the field has become very heterogeneous, and even sometimes contradictory. Taylor says quite simply that *"discourse analysis is the close study of language in use*" (Taylor, 2001:5). Gee and Handford add to this the notion of accomplishment and purpose that is constituted in discourse:

> *Discourse analysis is the study of language in use. It is the study of the meanings we give language and the actions we carry out when we use language in specific contexts. Discourse analysis is also sometimes defined as the study of language above the level of sentence, of the ways sentences combine to create meaning, coherence, and accomplish purpose.* (2014:1)

[14] Some key discourse analytic approaches include: CDA; systemic functional linguistics; multimodal discourse analysis; narrative analysis; discursive psychology; conversation analysis; and corpus-based discourse analysis. For a full discussion on different discourse approaches see: Gee, J. P. and Handford, M. (2014), *The Routledge Handbook of Discourse Analysis*, Routledge: Oxon.

Cassell et al. emphasize that discourse enquiry is *"characterised by taking human interpretations as a starting point for any analysis, with concern for how we socially construct reality around us"* (2009:516). In this light, individuals may reproduce prevailing discourses in context, but they are also agents in their own right who *do* things with such discourses. This view of discourse as a social practice in which discourse is shaped and constrained by social structures was championed by Fairclough (1992). As Phillips et al. explain:

> *…the relation of discourse and social structure is dialectical and mutually constituting because discourse can be considered as both an object and a practice. Similarly, discourse is continually and recursively acting on individual meaning making through the operation of texts.* (2008:772)

The linguistic turn (outlined in sub sub-section 3.2.1.1) was followed by the rhetorical turn (e.g. McCloskey, 1985), and the practice turn (Schatzki et al., 2001) already discussed at length in section 2.3 of chapter 2. As a context-based case study, my study integrates these perspectives by focusing on discourses and discursive practice. Discursive practice is constituted in conversations and social interactions and shaped by a wide range of linguistic forms. In his definition of discourse analysis Potter therefore adds the importance of these linguistic forms and how they are arranged:

> *DA has an analytic commitment to studying discourse as texts and talk in social practices …the focus is…on language as… the medium for interaction; analysis of discourse becomes, then analysis of what people do. One theme that is particularly emphasized here is the rhetorical or argumentative organization of talk and texts; claims and versions are constructed to undermine alternatives.* (Potter, 2004:203)

In this approach to discourse enquiry, sympathetic to the contested nature of discourse, the researcher pays as much attention to discursive content as to form (Gee, 1999). Attention to form supports exploration of the reality the speaker constructs, how this is accomplished or undermined, and how the speaker is selectively working up coherence and incoherence and constituting objectiveness (Silverman, 2006). Thus linguistically, rhetoric, metaphors and

narrative structures are important elements of the discursive landscape that hold the attention of the discourse scholar. Discourse analysis also offers concepts such as interpretive repertoires (broad discourses used to define identify and moral status), stake (used to discount actions of others), and scripts (construction of patterns from instances) (Silverman, 2006:223-234).

Discourse analysis as explained by Silverman (2006) and Potter (1996) differs from critical discourse analysis (CDA) by attending to psychological workings, and by taking a more relativist epistemology. CDA is recognized as being under-utilized as a research approach in strategic management scholarship. For instance, in the field of strategy as practice several calls have been made for its application (Balogun et al., 2014; Phillips et al., 2008; Vaara, 2015). However, the disadvantages of CDA are that it can lead to *"negativity and hyper-critique"* (Alvesson and Deetz, 2000:166), as well as a reliance upon assumptions which *"trade on a moral theory of language which treats certain sentence forms as more real and less mystifying than others"* (Potter, 1996:227). These were important considerations in my research given the polarization of academic CSR research (as discussed in chapter 2) around critical and positivist approaches and my commitment to exploring CSR with a fresh sociological eye. Additionally, though CDA research is multifarious and derives from different theoretical backgrounds, CDA researchers tend to follow specific and often rigorously systematic linguistic methodologies fine tuned to a philosophical interest. For instance, Wodak's discourse-historical approach (1995) or Fairclough's dialectical-relational approach (2009). Such approaches follow a more realist perspective (Phillips and Di Domenico, 2009) that would bring insufficient attention to the socially embedded, constructed realities that I sought to explore in my research. Another very practical consideration was uncertainty of access to official documentary material in the research field, materials that usually form the bedrock of CDA approaches.

In sum, in the interest of not imposing an overly critical or pre-conditioned lens on my research which might have led to a search for preconceived elements, I opted for a broad understanding of discourse enquiry, coherent with my epistemological and ontological approach while also offering the best leverage for exploring my research questions. To this end, I chose a broad and unspecified approach to discourse enquiry which would enable consideration of discourse as both an object and a practice and would not predetermine the research enquiry but maintain an open and exploratory approach that I could later interpret inductively.

3.3 Data and Data Collection Methods

This section explains my case study approach, and choice of data collection methods, including my approach to interviews and sampling, as well as observations and documentary material. Finally, I reflect on the ethical considerations during the research.

3.3.1 Research Design: The Case Study

This research project followed a single in-depth case study approach. The company identified as a potential research site through a contact at the University of Bath was Walgreens, part of the Walgreens Boots Alliance (WBA) since 2014. A case study approach was selected because, *"case study exhibits a profound respect for the complexity of social phenomena"* (Mabry, 2008:217), and because an *"interpretivist methodology encourages the case study researcher to be alert to patterns of activities and the variety of meanings participants ascribe to their experiences"* (Ibid). Case studies are a popular research approach across many disciplines for examining particular and complex phenomenon, as crucially case studies help develop understanding and theory development (Flick, 2007; Flyvbjerg, 2011; Mabry, 2008). Within strategy as practice research, multiple case studies are somewhat rare, with scholars favouring instead thick single case studies or comparative case studies, in order to expand knowledge of the socially embedded nature of practices.

For my research study, a single case study was chosen over two comparative case studies for practical reasons regarding the constraints of doctoral research, in that insufficient time was available to gather, organize, code and analyse the amount of data that two in-depth case studies would have generated. While the single case study is subject to academic fashions, Dyer and Wilkins defend the single case study arguing that it is a *"story against which researchers can compare their experiences and gain rich theoretical insights"* (1991:613). Dyer and Wilkins (1991) highlight too that single case-studies have played a pivotal role in advancing knowledge of organizations and social systems and *"been extremely powerful because their authors have described general phenomena so well that others have little difficulty seeing the same phenomena in their own experiences and research"* (1991:617).

Within the interpretivist approach, which by definition rejects theories of replication logic as favoured by some case study approaches (for instance Eisenhardt, 1989), the focus of the case study is to develop unique and particular insight (Tsoukas, 2009). Stake (2000) describes such cases as instrumental and intrinsic. The instrumental case study he argued is designed to provide insight and thick interpretation of an issue; whereas, the intrinsic case study is selected because the case itself holds specific interest and meaning (Stake, 2000). The case study I selected for this doctoral research project sits midway between Stake's intrinsic and instrumental categorization. It is instrumental or, as Mabry describes atypical (2008), because it offered insight into the key research questions on how discourse enables and constrains CSR practices by offering a wealth of complexity, depth and richness owing to the size of the company, and the embedded nature in which a significant number and range (see appendix 10.2) of middle managers were formally engaged in implementing CSR, thus offering potential for theory development. As an intrinsic case study, the company's ambition to be a leader in the healthcare sector and its transition from unstructured CSR to a CSR strategy in 2014 offered unique insight into the appropriation of CSR in such circumstances and context.

The case study is key to knowledge development and learning, as Flyvbjerg argues, *"context-dependent knowledge and experience are at the very heart of expert activity"* (2011:303). Despite this, the value, reliability and scientific weight of case study research are sometimes held in low regard (Gerring, 2004). Frequently, such concerns stem from case studies that are poorly developed. Flyvbjerg notes that a key misunderstanding amongst case study scholars is the idea that predictive, rule-based generalizations can be attained in the social sciences, when in fact *"social science has failed to deliver"* in this way (2011:303). Another difficulty with case study research is clearly identifying the unit of analysis (Lee, 1999). Conscious of the need to avoid micro-individualism and micro-myopia (Vaara and Whittington, 2012:28), and to remain flexible as regards research choices that may change because of data collection in the field, this study considered the **primary unit of analysis as *CSR talk.*[15]** In this respect, my research study differs significantly from other studies of CSR implementation which have conceived the embedded unit of analysis as the micro activities or behaviours of CSR teams or individual CSR professionals. The key advantage of this unit of analysis, and the distinctiveness of this study, is that CSR talk bridges both practitioners (as 'carriers of practice') and situated interactions by individuals about CSR. In this way the unit of analysis helps circumvent

[15] Consistent with definitions outlined in chapters 1 and 2, CSR talk includes talk about all the CSR fields listed by Lockett et al. (2006).

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methodological individualism and bring to the fore as much interactivity in context as possible. This difference in research design, underpinned by the concepts of practice and discourse theory, contributes to the richness of research findings and the insights developed from my study.

Many practice-based studies take an ethnomethodological approach, indeed even a longitudinal approach in order to capture dynamic processes as they unfold over time (see for instances Hengst et al.'s 2019 study on strategizing in sustainability). However, it immediately became clear when access conversations began with Walgreens that this type of intense and open access would not be offered or feasible. I therefore adopted a research approach (detailed below) to maximize close with relationships to the research (Johnson et al., 2010) and to optimise the ethnographic quality of my approach (Spradley, 1979). This research study was initially comprised of one intense research trip of two weeks to the corporate headquarters in the U.S. in January 2017. This field study was combined with a series of informal interactions in both London and the U.S. over a period of one year to gather background, contextual and follow-up information. Subsequently, I negotiated access for a second intense research trip which took place in October 2017. In total I spent 135 hours in situ at the company headquarters. The following sub-sections (3.3.2-3.3.6) detail my approach to the research conducted during the research trips.

3.3.2 Semi-Structured Interviews

In-depth interviews can be a very effective method for gathering data of discourses, and are *"particularly well suited for studying people's understanding of the meanings in their lived world"* (Kvale and Brinkmann, 2009:116). I chose semi-structured interviews for this study because they enable interaction and opportunity to develop dialogue (Sayer, 1992), as well as opportunity for observation of the *"imagined meanings of ordinary events […] that give meaning to the flow of a life"* (Lamont and Swidler, 2014:159). Kvale describes the semi-structured interview as:

> *A semi-structured life-world interview attempts to understand themes of the lived daily world from the subjects' own perspectives. This interview seeks to obtain descriptions of the interviewees' lived world with respect to interpretation of the meaning of the described phenomena. It comes close to an everyday conversation,*

> *but as a professional interview it has a purpose and it involves a specific approach and technique; it is semi-structured – it is neither an open everyday conversation nor a closed questionnaire.* (Kvale, 2007:11).

As Kvale describes, the interview comes close to an everyday conversation. It is not strictly what Potter would describe as *'naturally occurring talk'* such as a text between doctor and patient, but Potter does recognize that interviews can be conceptualised *"as arenas for interaction between two or more parties. That is, we can treat them as a form of natural conversational interaction, by analysing them in the same way that we might a telephone conversation between friends"* (2016:192). In this respect, and in accordance with my epistemology, my interview approach and style aspired to follow Kvale's description of the interviewer as traveller (as opposed to miner), who walks *"along with the local inhabitants, asks questions and encourages them to tell their own stories of their lived world"* (Kvale, 2007:19-20), though not co-production as some constructionist approaches may advocate (Cassell, 2009:506).

Time constraints in the corporate setting are an important consideration when interviewing, as was the case with my study in which a small number of interviewees cut their responses short on account of pressing work demands. Owing to time constraints I followed semi-structured interviews, as opposed to open-ended interviews, to ensure I could cover a certain number of key areas and retain some control over the interview. To meet these demands my interview guide consisted of four overarching topics, with some assorted follow-up prompts (that I relied upon depending on the context of each interview) and loosely following a *"predetermined sequence"* (Lee, 1999:62), depending on how the interviewee responded.

Before the official research began I conducted a pilot study of seven interviews with Boots U.K. to ascertain the appropriateness of the interview guide and style. A report of my reflections from the pilot study and a copy of the provisional interview guide are attached in appendices 10.3 and 10.4 respectively. Key learning points from the pilot study included: the need to develop as much contextual knowledge as possible to avoid having to ask for factual clarifications during interviews and use up valuable time; and, the need to pay more attention to explaining the type of study and conversation sought in order to put participants at ease and develop participant's open, honest and free reflections (Alvesson, 2003), rather than objectivised corporately scripted responses. To address this, I introduced and stressed

the purpose of the interview as a space for reflections, perceptions, thoughts and observations of the interviewee as regard their particular experience in relation to CSR, underlining that there were no right or wrong responses. I had to also adapt aspects of the interview guide which participants did not easily engage with. For example, wording such as 'enabling' and 'constraining' failed to resonate with participants, whereas 'buy in' and 'negotiating' resulted in more fluid conversation. The new interview guide developed as a result of the pilot study and sent to my contacts prior to commencing the research project is attached in appendix 10.4 (version 2). The follow-up questions in my interview guide were prompts for me as interviewer and were not intended or followed as a check list.

Semi-structured interviews are a strong and favoured method for developing qualitative research because they offer coherence across the research process by acting as a control, whilst also being flexible (Fontana and Frey, 2005; Flick, 2007). Flexibility enables the researcher to pursue areas raised by the interviewee sensitively and in ways that a strictly structured interview would not facilitate, *"maintaining a balance between free flowing and a directed conversation"* (Lee, 1999:62). Given the exploratory nature of my research study, loyalty to the semi-structured interview was important, if I was to gain insight into multiple variations of specific sites and moments in practice. In this respect, interviews exploring discourse are different to other interviews in the way the researcher pays attention to the interactions:

> *First, variation in response is as important as consistency. Second, techniques, which allow diversity rather than those which eliminate it are emphasized, resulting in more informal conversational exchanges and third, interviewers are seen as active participants rather than like speaking questionnaires.* (Potter and Wetherell, 1987:165)

In attending to the style of the interviews and managing the balance of time with the need for exploration as described by Potter and Wetherell (1987) above, while all interviews were initially scheduled for one hour, at least 10 interviews lasted more than one hour. In some cases, research participants requested a second interview time slot to continue developing their responses. These interviews were especially valuable, offering in-depth insights into some of the most complex areas of my research. A few interviewees relayed to colleagues that the interview experience was 'more interesting' than they had initially anticipated. These in-depth interviews that stretched over two time slots, but occurred

during the same field trip, I have counted as one interview. Although some interviewees expressed a certain satisfaction at participating in the interviews, it was also the case that some interviewees appeared or expressed discomfort with some questions: questions which they either felt unable to respond to or had had a different expectation (often objectivist) of the interview (Shakespeare, 1998:41-59; Taylor, 2001:18). In these interviews I altered wording to facilitate understanding, or abandoned the topic depending on the interviewee's level of comfort.

All interviews were audio-recorded and transcribed. The majority of interviews were conducted face to face in the workplace setting in a closed meeting room. A few interviews were conducted via telephone or skype, for instance with regional store managers on the west coast of the U.S., one interview was conducted at the London based office. The average interview length was 49:20 minutes (see appendix 10.2). Interviews were conducted on agreed terms of anonymity, but not confidentiality. The purpose and terms of the interview were explained at the beginning of the interview and the recorder was not switched on until research participants had confirmed consent. A few of my explanations of the research study to interviewees were captured in transcripts and I have included some illustrative examples in appendix 10.5. One research participant requested the recorder be switched off during the interview, at which point notes were taken. During the research I made further modifications to the interview guide, the most major of which was to add a final question on the significance of continued tobacco sales by Walgreens. Although this topic had arisen in my initial preparations with my contacts at Walgreens, it was not until I arrived at Walgreens' headquarters in January 2017 that it became apparent the topic was significant to interviewees. The different versions of the interview guide are detailed in appendix 10.4.

A last word needs to be said about the context of the interviews, especially give the context-based nature of this study. Consistent with Marschan-Piekkari et al.'s (2004) four contextual levels of the research interviewer and interviewee, it's first important to acknowledge my presence as an interviewer from another continent, and from a British academic institution. In this regard all my interviewees were educated to university level reducing to some extent the risk of power differential. A more concerning issue was that on account of gaining access into the company via one of the global managers, I might have been perceived as a 'headquarter[s] spy' (Welch et al., 2002). To address this issue, especially if asked, I stressed my academic role, my career background in the non-profit sector and the fact that I had no prior or other type of relationship with WBA. Second, from

the point of view of the interviewee there are a number of points to make. At the external level, the first field trip happened at the time of the official inauguration of President Donald Trump which appeared to cause some disturbance, if only uncertainty about the future.

Third, in regard of the external environment, there are considerations about the cultural circumstances and labour climate in the U.S. that are different to those in Europe and have implications for the way individuals act and perceive themselves and others in the work place. My previous experience working on the Americas, including on the U.S., meant that these differences were not odd or novel to me, so while sensitive and observant of them, I was not distracted by them. Fourth, at the organizational level, the merger, the size of Walgreens, its longevity as a company, its strategy and culture all had a role to play in the research process. I have therefore tried to provide sufficient in-depth description in chapter 4 to facilitate the reader in this aspect. At the individual level, some interviewees engaged very whole heartedly in the interviewing, whereas others were very busy. One even conducted the interview by phone whilst driving a car, teaching me an important lesson about authoritatively specifying ground rules.

3.3.3 Sampling

In this study, I requested interviews with middle managers based on their ability to provide insight according to their formal CSR roles and responsibilities. Appendix 10.6 details the initial request made to my contacts at Walgreens. As well as those middle managers with formal CSR roles and responsibilities exclusively, I requested interviews with middle managers holding formal CSR responsibilities partially embedded in their roles, for instance diversity and human resource management. The opportunity to interview middle managers with differing degrees and types of CSR responsibilities would offer richness of context, depth and variety to the study. In particular, I sought research participants who crossed organizational boundaries (Rouleau, 2005) because of their experience with strategy and CSR discourses in different areas of the organization. Middle managers from a wide range of positions in the organizational hierarchy were selected in order to add insight and depth into meanings constituted from strategy and CSR discourse at different points in the organizational structure, and to ensure the study captured meanings constituted in both formal and informal discourses. As a result, those interviewed included global directors, directors, vice-presidents, senior managers, departmental managers, managers, associate

managers, thematic and project managers and team coordinators (see appendix 10.2). While the majority of interviewees were middle managers based at the company headquarters, some interviewees were regional level managers. For the purpose of the research, all managers are referred to in the findings as middle managers.

Having established an initial sample of 15 research participants together with my contact at Walgreens, I then expanded the sample group through snowballing, asking research participants to suggest other participants who on account of their formal responsibilities would be suitable for the study. In this way I expanded the sample group to 32 during the first research trip, and 16 for the second research trip. Not all the suggested participants were available to interview during my research trip, suggesting a level of voluntary self-selection commensurate with the terms of consent. In total 50 interviews were conducted involving 47 middle managers with formal CSR responsibilities (CSR practitioners), plus one executive manager, bringing the total number of interviewees to 48. However, I eliminated two research participants from the sample group after determining they actually held no formal responsibility for CSR. I also isolated the executive manager's interview, drawing on it only occasionally in the findings.

Therefore the findings of this thesis correspond to a total 45 middle managers. Of these 20 were women and 25 men. Eleven were engaged full time in enacting the company CSR strategy, and the remainder held varying degrees of CSR responsibilities in their roles (see appendix 10.2). Of the 11 engaged in full time CSR roles, 10 had previously held middle manager roles elsewhere in the organization. These roles included responsibilities for product sustainability, supply chain integrity, ethical compliance, environmental and waste management, diversity and inclusion, health and safety, philanthropy, and corporate social responsibility reporting and communications.

3.3.4 Observations and Interactions

Case *"findings often result from an interweaving of interview findings with other sources of data collection approaches. So, the interview is not necessarily an isolated incident, but rather a component of a complex research context"* (Cassell, 2009:506). In addition to interviews, eight CSR meeting observations were conducted totally seven hours and 12 minutes (see appendix 10.7), four of these were virtual. I have not referred to these

observations in my analysis because, with one exception, the meetings I observed were largely information sharing meetings rather than 'discussions'. For instance, the four CSR champion (conference call) meetings I observed (virtually) involved head office CSR managers providing CSR champions (from head office and around the country) information about upcoming CSR activities. For the most part no other participants spoke during these meetings. In addition to the observations, I made notes from conversations I observed or participated in, which I have termed interactions (see also appendix 10.7). The interactions were especially helpful in enabling me to gain insight into less formal aspects of Walgreens' culture (Cassell, 2009). In particular research participants discussed topics that weren't part of the CSR program that they thought should be. They also discussed dynamics in the executive leadership team, as well as their personal careers and life stories. These interactions do not sit at the centre of my research data set, but rather helped ground my understanding of the wider organizational context in which research participants worked and lived. I have in my findings only occasionally made reference to these observations.

3.3.5 Documents and Material Artefacts

Managerial research in organizations is restricted by the fact that it is always carried out by permission (Buckley and Chapman, 1996), and this case was no exception. Once in the field it became clear that access constraints on internal documents relevant to the research topic meant that an analysis of organizational documentation would not be within the scope of my research project. I therefore used documents available externally, three CSR reports, one book about Walgreens (Kogan and Kogan, 1989) that I was gifted by my contacts, and a number of press releases, in two different ways. First, I drew on these materials for information to build an in-depth description of the case study context (Bryman and Bell, 2011), which is presented in chapter 4. Second, I drew on published CSR reports, including executive management letters in these reports, to check and confirm excerpts of official CSR discourse fragments that were referenced by research participants during interviews.

Thus, my starting point was CSR talk drawn from my interview data and where CSR talk referenced official executive statements, I sought to clarify these statements and their interactive links in the discursive chain (Lamont and Swidler, 2014). It's important to acknowledge that my study does not include a systematic analysis of official documentary material, and that whilst in the field my research focus crystallized as the appropriation and

understanding of CSR by middle managers with formal CSR responsibilities as found in the unit of analysis 'CSR talk'.

3.3.6 Ethical Considerations

All researchers, including academic researchers, have ethical duties. At the simplest level these duties refer to the principles of doing no harm and of informed consent. In the academic field, 'do no harm' assumes that scholarly research is instigated for social good and care is taken to ensure respect and the well-being of research participants. Informed consent is required from participants to ensure they both understand the nature of the research they partake in, as well as consent to the use of their data. A number of research scandals in the late twentieth century in which data was collected from individuals without their knowledge, or instances in the natural sciences in which data was faked or manipulated, have highlighted the need for continuous vigilance (Flick, 2007). As discussed above, informed consent of research participants and shared understanding of data use and lifetime was agreed at the start of interviews before recordings started. Building trust through an appropriate informed consent procedure was important in ensuring research quality.

In terms of individual participants, due attention and sensitivity was paid to the potentially political nature of data collected during interview, and appropriate steps were taken to ensure agreed levels of disclosure and anonymity, at the start, during, and post interview. For instance, requests were made for feedback from individual interviews, requests that I declined. In addition, in presenting data I have disaggregated functions and seniority, and randomised numbering and sequencing of each interview (e.g., M56; M11) to preserve anonymity and ensure participants would not 'guess' interviewees by their hierarchy, role, or the stage at which they were interviewed. Direct quotes from interviews, hereafter, are referenced as (Int. M). In instances where interviewees referred to individual executive managers, identifiable local charities, self or other particularities that might identify the speaker, I have replaced these with [executive manager] or, [name removed] or [we].

Power differentials in the interview setting have been discussed by a number of scholars (Cassell, 2009; Denzin and Lincoln, 2005; Kvale 2006). In particular, a concern is shared

from the perspective of exploitation and taking information from participants and offering little in return. To address these concerns on reciprocity, and about which a number of participants enquired, I took a number of steps. First, I provided my main contact with thematic feedback on the findings as they developed and offered a final feedback debriefing. I shared expert materials on CSR and CSR strategizing, such as the latest academic books and some articles, with some key contacts who assisted my access. During interviews when asked, I expressed the ambition and intention that data collected would contribute to academic thinking and lead to publications. As regards power differentials and my role, I avoided playing the role of expert during interviews. Although some participants inferred upon me as interviewer a role of expert, in the interest of maintaining the interview on track, and maintaining as apolitical stance as possible (though this is never fully achievable), I declined this role with comments such as 'I wouldn't know'. I also refrained (when possible) from sharing detailed information about my past experience or expertise, although as already mentioned, a certain amount of sharing was required at times to maintain trust with interviewees.

Turning to the organizational level, a large corporation is a powerful entity and not in the unequal position such as an indigenous community having knowledge extracted on terms little understood locally (Denzin and Lincoln, 2005:1). Rather, a large corporation is in control of its knowledge. Equally, a large corporation in opening its door to academic, as well as other types of observation and critique, willingly agrees to such levels of knowledge sharing, indeed that is a crucial aspect of CSR practice many would argue. In this research study, I was not required by Walgreens to sign a contractual or formal agreement to regulate the arrangement between us. In this regard, as researcher I am bound by the terms of consent set out before my interviews and the usual ethical codes and standards we consider appropriate as regards anonymization, data security, data ownership, contact and interview regime, feedback and final output arrangements. I confirmed this open-ended arrangement with my main contact during the course of the research, the last confirmation of which was granted on 25th November 2017.

3.4 Data Analysis Method

My analysis focused on how CSR talk was constructed by CSR practitioners at Walgreens, and how CSR strategizing was enabled and constrained by meanings constituted in these constructions. This section focuses on processes of transcribing, coding, analysing,

interpreting and writing-up my data that I adopted to develop a meaningful analysis of my field data.

3.4.1 Transcribing and Coding

Forty-eight audio recordings were transcribed (from 46 interviewees), ten by me, sixteen key interviews by an accredited transcription service[16] and the remainder by an independent consultant. The transcription process started immediately whilst in the field conducting research. All the transcriptions were reviewed and corrected by me. Hard copies were retained, read and re-read. Digital versions were stored securely and backed up. Initially I anticipated using the electronic system NVivo® to assist with data management and analysis by facilitating the quick querying of data, visualizing data and reporting of data (Bazeley and Jackson, 2013). However, the time it took to learn the new system and then input data seemed unnecessarily tardy, and I was keen to make progress. I therefore took the decision to code and analyse my data in simple word format, using simple search techniques, tables and categories. The coding process with a highly structured interview may be relatively standardized (Cassell, 2009), however in semi-structured interviews coding is a more heuristic and inductive process. In line with my inductive exploratory approach, I followed an open coding method in which 42 codes were developed initially from key words and minor phrases in the data suggestive of key themes and potential patterns as regards my unit of analysis 'CSR talk' (see appendix 10.8).

As discourses are not 'units' with clear boundaries (Gee, 1999) my initial coding categories were 'fuzzy' (Silverman, 2000) sometimes overlapping. One of the most difficult aspects of this exercise was training myself *"to use themes, or codes reliably"* (Boyatzis, 1998:10), and to apply my judgements in coding consistently. After several months of cutting and pasting interview excerpts of text into word files I realized somewhat dauntingly that I had reorganized volumes of field data into volumes of coded data. As I read and then reread these files of coded data locating themes and key elements, I realized, sometimes to my surprise, that I had a system for not just searching and allocating my data, but also helping reflect on my data in different ways. However, as Potter says, as an inductive researcher I also realized coding is partly *"an analytic preliminary used to build a corpus of manageable size rather than a procedure that performs the analysis itself"* (2016:201). Had I understood at that stage just how lengthy the next stages of analysis and interpretation

[16] Transcription Divas U.K., using standard "intelligent" verbatim.

would be, you perhaps might not be reading this thesis now, however, I was keen and eager, which is just as well considering the path that lay ahead.

3.4.2 Analysis

For the qualitative researcher analysis is a *"pervasive activity throughout the life of a research project… not simply one of the later stages of the research, to be followed by an equally separate phase of writing up results"* (Coffey and Atkinson, 1996:10-11). This activity is an ongoing, open process, the advantage of which is that the researcher is not digging or mining for some objective truth or reality, nor tied to a specific position. Rather, the researcher, through multiple reflections, develops interpretations and insights that uncover new meanings. The disadvantage of this approach is that it can lead to collections of vast quantities of data that overwhelm and trap the researcher (Alvesson and Sköldberg, 2009). This sub-section focuses on my process of ordering and analysing my empirical data to construct meanings relevant to my theoretical approach.

In the interpretivist tradition of bricolage (Denzin and Lincoln, 2003), I inductively and heuristically asked questions of and problematized the data, in particular as regards to interview statements made to me as obvious and as "fact" (Abbot, 2004:123). This initial stage of my analysis proved vital. I had travelled to the research location and found what appeared to be, a very straight forward case of shared value CSR (Porter and Kramer, 2006) as one might expect in the U.S. What was interesting about that? What was interesting about CSR practitioners' discursive preoccupation with the language of return on investment (ROI) and cost savings? Surely this was what they were supposed to say? Surely this is what everyone expects them to say? (I freely admit to some rhetorical licence here). Likewise, and very curiously to me, as I discussed my data with various colleagues, in particular the data regarding tobacco, I was met with a lot of *so what* questions. *"All American pharmacies sell tobacco in the States,"* some would say. *"Well what would you expect from a big retailer?"* they would add.

As well as asking questions of my data, I needed to keep an open mind and be attentive to a wide range of discursive approaches that might help interpret the data in ways that magnified the thickness and richness of its socially constructed nature. In this regard, I drew on a thematic analysis (Boyatzis, 1998), analysis of form and content ('whos' and 'whats')

(Gee, 1999) as well as aspects of social psychology (Potter and Wetherell, 1987) and textual or narrative structure (Silverman, 2006:164) that as a 'researcher-as-*bricoleur* theorist' (Denzin and Lincoln, 2003:9) added and refined reflections and interpretations. Similarly, while I did not conduct a personal pronoun analysis (Harding, 2008), I did pay attention to pronouns in specific areas of the data where role and identities were important. In this successive questioning and examining of data I developed a condensed picture made up of three different lenses held over three different fleeting moments of practice (Cooren, 2015) visualised by the research process. These lenses are best described through the concept of *montage*:

> *In montage, several different images are superimposed onto one another to create a picture. In a sense, montage is like pentimento, in which something that has been painted out of a picture (an image the painter "repented,", or denied) becomes visible again, creating something new. What is new is what has been obscured by a previous page.* (Denzin and Lincoln, 2003:6)

The remainder of this present sub-section (sub sub-sections 3.4.2.1 to 3.4.2.3) details the different phases in my analysis which led to this *montage*, and shows how the analysis and research findings, although presented across three chapters, are in fact a whole and (consistent with practice theory) follow the underlying assumption of *montage* that viewers perceive and interpret the shots in a *"montage sequence not sequentially, or one at a time, but rather simultaneously"* (Cook, 1981:172). For presentational reasons I have divided this analysis process into three phases. In reality, the phases were not so tightly drawn, and I worked iteratively between the phases, in particular phases two and three, where questions I asked at these latter stages would help me reflect more on how I had interpreted my data at phase two and lead to new reflections and interpretations.

3.4.2.1 Phase One

Having noted considerable overlap in the themes and elements organized under my 42 codes, I returned to my initial sense of the data, from the perspective of my research aims and my "*grounding in the fundamentals and concepts of the fields relevant to the inquiry"* (Boyatzis, 1998:9). Taking the strategy as practice approach, it was clear that even under the rigor of coding, my data was telling me three very different stories about strategizing moments in CSR

practice. Three key characteristics made these three stories discernible. First, the nature of the structure imposed on the data through the interview guide and theory organized the bulk of the data into three distinct strategizing windows, not strictly, but noticeably (see Figure 3). Second, the overarching theme in each of the three windows was salient and distinctive. And third, the voice of the research participants was distinctive in terms of what interviewees were *doing* with CSR talk in each of these three windows. These three windows into moments of CSR strategizing formed the framework for the next phases of my analysis.

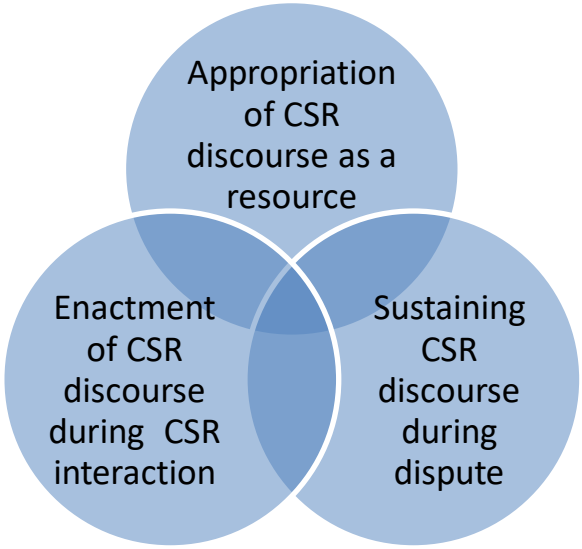


Figure 3: Moments in CSR strategizing: theory-based themes

3.4.2.2 Phase Two

My task now was to analyse the data from the perspective of the 'whos' and 'whats'. This was the most important phase of my analysis as the consideration of discourse as both an object and a practice (Cooren, 2015; Gee, 1999; Phillips et al., 2008) was vital for developing an understanding of agency in a web of practices and avoiding micro-isolationism (Seidl and Whittington, 2014:1408). Gee says this begins *"with the question of who you are when you speak or write and what you are doing. When you speak or write anything, you use the resources of English to project yourself as a certain kind of person, a different kind in different circumstances"* (1999:22). Analysing the 'whos' and 'whats' on the face of it seems a simple task. In practice, I found this process very time consuming and intense as Easterby-Smith et al. point out *"interpretation of data may be very difficult, and this depends on the intimate, tacit knowledge of the researchers"* (2012:28). In fact, it was not easy to separate when an individual

was talking about self, or the organization, other stakeholders or forms of materiality. As Gee says, *"whos and whats are not really discrete and separable […] So it is better, in fact, to say that utterances communicate an integrated, though often multiple or "heteroglossic," who-doing-what"* (1999:23).

In applying this analytical lens to my first research moment concerning appropriation of the CSR strategy, my analysis highlighted how interviewees appropriated CSR as an affirmational resource to construct a range of preferred ideal realities. In so doing they constructed a preferred life world, a reality that the discourse of Walgreens' CSR strategy assisted in materializing. Close reading and rereading of data highlighted a wide range of rhetorical discursive tactics to support and objectify the construction of this life world. For instance, I had originally coded for old CSR strategy and new CSR strategy, but found that these codes did not withstand analysis as the two were not separable. In fact, by focusing on 'whos' and 'whats' I could analyse how some interviewees reconstructed the organization's past creating a favourable portrayal that aligned with desires for the present and future. This temporality in the data opened up the narrative qualities contained in statements made by research participants.

The second research moment concerning enactment of the new CSR strategy focused on CSR practitioners' interactions with others, including self. In applying the 'whos' and 'whats' analytical lens to this aspect of my data, I identified five discursive sites where CSR practitioners constituted CSR practices as they enacted CSR. At each of these sites CSR practitioners constituted themselves and CSR practices in ways that constructed a certain type of meaning and life world in the company. For instance, working iteratively with my coded data I was drawn to one salient discourse concerned with constructing CSR as an opportunity to improve the success of others in contributing to the main business strategy. Data fragments here referred to 'getting recognition', 'earning credits' underlining the different ways CSR was constituted to construct success as constituted in the performance of localised strategy practices.

In applying the 'whos' and 'whats' analytical lens to the third research moment concerning sustaining CSR practices during dispute, I analysed my coded data for deeper insights into the nature of the justifications CSR practitioners made regarding Walgreens' continued tobacco sales. In this window I identified five key thematic discourses characterising CSR practitioners' responses. In focusing on the discourse of smoking cessation for instance, analysis of 'whos' and 'whats' highlighted how CSR practitioners constructed the organization as benevolent, as opposed to remiss in its social responsibilities. Likewise, analysis highlighted how CSR

practitioners drew on the familiar customer choice discourse to construct the organization (in relation to its actions on tobacco) as simply following rules of a higher order. In this way, iteratively working between my coded themes and my analytical questions, some of which I drew from Potter and Wetherell's typology of accounts (1987), I gradually built a picture of how the diversity of interviewee voices constructed and maintained a preferred portrayal of the company that was loosely distributed but shared. This phase of my analysis was a very lengthy process because *"people may use different words to refer to the same thing, and they may produce similar accounts when referring to different experienced realities. This is perhaps trivial to point out, but it is frequently neglected in social research"* (Alvesson and Kärreman, 2000a:139).

3.4.2.3 Phase Three

In the latter stages of my analysis I asked more questions of my empirical material, underlining how in interpretive research *"what one learns at the time is not fully understood and may in fact be reinterpreted and seen later in new ways"* (Van Maanen, 1979:548). A key question became what were research participants associating themselves with and disassociating themselves from? This question led me to focus on some of the smaller fragments of statements that I had not necessarily paid much attention to previously when I had been wrestling with making sense of my data. In continually reflecting on my data from this perspective I found some significant cracks. These cracks presented themselves as minor phrases often in the final stages of a statement. At times I had to return to my transcripts to check whether I had deleted these minor phrases during coding that now seemed to take on more significance.

In this way, utterances that first appeared marginal, transformed into principle in the deconstructionist sense that, *"an almost invisible crack in the façade of a work will prove to be symptom of a flaw in the entire edifice; or with a different metaphor, that there exists an apparently insignificant wound which is in reality bleeding through the entire body of the text"* (Alvesson and Skölberg, 2009:185). Statements research participants constructed constituting the new CSR strategy as a positive discourse with words such as 'amazing' and 'fantastic', became eclipsed by phrases such 'we're not just cogs in a wheel', 'not just checking tasks', 'it's nice to do for them' and 'to be well loved'. These fragments suggested a different context existed for my interviewees that I had not consciously accounted for, or I had been treating as taken-for-granted background (Abbott, 2004:141). I began to ask

different questions about what CSR talk was *really* doing in my case study. These new reflections in my data analysis, which did not happen uniformly or promptly, set me on a search for what more I might have missed.

At this stage I also refined my analysis of the structural discursive moves in the data and paid fine-grained attention to analysing the significance of rhetoric and metaphor deployed by research participants to objectify and rationalise statements. Had I really understood what these discursive moves were doing? I explored the data further using the techniques highlighted by Potter, such as stake and scripts (Silverman, 2006:223-234), and Silverman's attention to the 'narrative structure' of a text, as regards who are the principle agents and what purpose does the text serve? (2006:166). I looked at how CSR practitioners constructed CSR talk not just within existing strategy discourse, but within meanings offered by executives' talk. It would be misleading to present this analysis as a discursive psychology analysis or a narrative analysis, rather what these approaches have in common is an ambition to understand from a social constructionist point of view what agents *do* in talk, and how all talk is *doing*. Hence, these approaches helped draw attention to the different ways of seeing and interpreting how CSR talk was constructed by research participants to constitute a certain type of CSR strategizing.

3.4.3 Writing Up

Consistent with my epistemology and practice theory approach, my empirical data did not represent a process with a start, middle and end. I could not present my findings in terms of process formations, though instances of process were often apparent in my data. Rather, the three key 'moments' at the centre of my analytical interpretations (see Figure 3) were firstly theoretically underpinned, and secondly, complex and rich snapshots of CSR strategizing in which the 'moments' covering the three findings chapters (appropriation, enactment and sustaining) occurred simultaneously. For this reason, the concept of montage suited my writing up approach as it easily accommodates complexity associated with in-depth case studies and rich context-based data:

> *In texts based on the metaphors of montage, quilt making, and jazz improvisation, many different things are going on at the same time- different voices, different perspectives, points of view, angles of vision. Like performance texts, works that use*

> *montage simultaneously create and enact moral meaning. They move from the personal to the political, the local to the historical and the cultural. These are dialogical texts. They presume an active audience.* (Denzin and Lincoln, 2003:7)

One challenge in writing was my somewhat anthropological approach, and a reluctance to cut research participants' statements, aiming perhaps when I started to retain as much totality or holism as possible in line with the thick description I committed to (Geertz, 1973). Critics might view this approach as an attempt to verify the ontological status of the cultural context regarding the case study (Alvesson and Sköldberg, 2009:199). My intention has been to intensify the illustrative, but also reflective, glimpse into the moments of CSR strategizing the research afforded. In this respect I have generated a *montage* of the research *"as what is being investigated is itself regarded as a montage"* (Ibid 2009:203). Another challenge in writing up was how to present findings in ways that best highlighted a close fit between research claims and empirical material. While we may all desire our research to have grand and emancipatory significance, in reality we focus on small slithers of knowledge, so *"perhaps, research tasks may be reconsidered so that they become less ambitious in scope and more ambitious in terms of rigor and thoughtfulness concerning the linguistic dimension"* (Alvesson and Kärreman, 2000a:140). Equally important, was the need to separate research claims (findings) from interpretations, and to understand the difference between interpretation and insight. As Alvesson and Deetz explain:

> *Insight is closely related to — integral to and an outcome of — interpretation. An interpretation aims to read something into what is ambiguous — or what can be productively turned into something ambiguous through turning the simple and self-evident into something complex and open. Interpretation draws attention to the open nature of a phenomenon — a text, an act, a statement, physical material. Insight then may be seen as an outcome of a successful interpretation. A successful interpretation, that is insight: (a) addresses something non-obvious, (b) makes sense of something, and (c) is perceived as enriching understanding — it adds something to what the subject understood prior to the insight.* (2000:139-140)

Finally, I have presented the different voices of my research participants to capture the diversity of their perspectives. Consistent with my epistemology this means that these voices sometimes seem contradictory, making the research text rich, but not unambiguous, as is common of interpretative research sensitive to cultural contexts (Geertz, 1973). This is

the same for my discussion. My discussion develops a number of theoretical readings on the research findings which some may find contradictory in some respects, adding I hope to the reflexive quality of the research (Alvesson and Skölberg, 2009:219). For instance, in sub-section 8.43, I take up the call by (Schoeneborn et al., 2019) for CSR research to incorporate theories that offer different perspectives such as Boltanski and Thévenot's (2006[1991]) theory of orders of worth. The interpretation I develop in the discussion is one of CSR practice as compromise, a form of strategizing that Gond et al. (2015) also highlight as benefiting from a Boltanski and Thévenot (2006[1991]) lens. By drawing from Boltanski and Thévenot's (2006[1991]) theory of orders of worth, the discussion offers a reading of my findings which, a) foregrounds the more informal, ritualised and domestic discourses constituting the case study context of this research study, and, b) elucidates how in the context of these localised discourses CSR practitioners traded in discourses to reach accommodations. The reading in sub-section 8.3.4 is limited in its reach because of the limits of this thesis but offers an interesting perspective that challenges pro-progress assumptions often associated with CSR implementation.

3.5 Reflexivity

Reflexivity is the continuous awareness and attention to *"the way different kinds of linguistic, social, political and theoretical elements are woven together in the process of knowledge development, during which empirical material is constructed, interpreted and written"* (Alvesson and Skölberg, 2000:5). In interpretive research researchers are part of their research and understand the need to be clear about their own point of view and interests. Moreover, *"the interpretive bricoleur understands that research is an interactive process shaped by his or her personal history, biography, gender, social class, race, and ethnicity, and by those of the people in the setting*" (Denzin and Lincoln, 2003:9). In addition, Taylor states that:

> *The identity of the researcher becomes relevant to discourse analytic research in several ways. First, it influences the selection of the topic or research area. The researcher is likely to conduct a project which chimes with her or his personal interests, sympathies and political beliefs. This is usual in all research but is perhaps particularly true when projects are relatively small and involve only one or two researchers.* (2001:17)

In this respect, I cannot have assumed to be an impartial observer of my research or assume to have created some truth about the reality of my research participants. Rather, I was involved in constructing the research and my identity and role influenced the construction of meanings and created realities through their interpretations and representations (Cunliffe, 2008). Reflexivity was therefore vital throughout my research, not least because I have a past identity as a (non-academic) researcher, and a background working on socially and politically significant topics, which means I hold certain assumptions about the way the world works. Also, I associate strongly with the role of manager and consultant and problem-solving approach in the organizational setting. However, in line with my own epistemological commitments and consistent with a nominalist ontology, reflexivity was a vital part of the research process in as much as analysing how my research participants constructed their world. I therefore had to be conscious and clear about how I construct my world and capable of identifying my own projections, as well as adjusting assumptions revealed in the developing data collection.

A key concern during my research for me was managing my personal influence on the research. How would I manage, in view of the above, the personal emotions that may be provoked by discussing topics I had been immersed in all my life? What impact were my sentiments likely to have on the interview process? Emotions tell us we are connecting with the data, but the emotions produced as part of the research do not necessarily belong to the researcher. Keeping records of emotions and incidents during interviews, as well as at other times, can help researchers to distinguish between personal emotions and those of others, and help produce meaningful reflections. As Bansal and Corley (2012) relate, in their summary of key characteristics of qualitative research, a strong connection to the data ensures a tighter journey from start to finish and ensures the linkage between process and emerging insights is rigorous and visible. A particular concern was the interview setting, and how to achieve the right balance between building trust, but not instrumentalizing, manipulating or controlling the interview interpretation and outcome. To some extent, this risk was mitigated by time constraints, there simply was insufficient time for me to get ‘involved’ in the interviews, and any time I spent talking was valuable time I was taking away from data gathering. On another level, I had to acknowledge that at least some of my research participants might perceive me as ‘the expert’, ‘the academic’ or even ‘the European’ and this might induce certain responses from them.

Validity as such is not a concept relevant to interpretivist research, nonetheless the question of the quality and trustworthiness of the researcher's judgements is important. Hammersley (2008) argues that subjective judgement exercised during the analysis process is the key to research validity. One reason for this is that in qualitative research, validity *"is not a matter of methodological hair-splitting about the fifth decimal point, but a question of whether the researcher sees what he or she thinks he or she sees"* (Kirk and Miller, 1986:21). This issue of plausibility (as opposed to validity), often rests on the critical strength of the reflexive process developed by the researcher in the reaching of interpretations, as Alvesson and Sköldberg say, *"a good interpretation forces us to think and rethink"* (2009:168). Alvesson and Sköldberg advise that, *"two principal foci are possible in this type of interpretation. One reveals the source of some particular distorted or repressive idea, while the other investigates the contents of the idea in question"* (Ibid). In applying this concept to the questions posed in my research study and its interpretations, it was clear for example that the research suggested at some levels that strategy practice held certain promises for middle managers in terms of power, authority, success and status. The purpose of my research was not to prove this true or false, clearly it can be both, but rather, to interpret *what* this meant. If middle managers felt seduced by, or beholden to performing strategy practices these feelings would influence how they appropriated and enacted CSR practices.

Ensuring trustworthiness of the researcher means paying special attention to researcher bias and building in safeguards and falsification attempts to protect against unwanted or unconscious selective perceptions and skewed interpretations, whilst simultaneously being clear about predetermined views and lenses. Mindful of the antagonistic discourses sometimes associated with American firms as well as large corporations, Mumby's warning of how some studies *"overreach their claims about what remarks made in an interview can tell us about a broader organizational reality"* (2011:1150), served as a constant reality check of my interpretations.

Perhaps at this juncture it is also useful to be clear on my reasons for embarking on this research study. During my career I have often been struck by two aspects regarding business contributions to society. The first was the level of contentment often expressed by business folk as regard their CSR initiatives which others would often regard as misplaced. My second curiosity related to the relative disappointment often expressed by scholars, analysts and practitioners as regards a firm's CSR endeavours in the community. In this respect, I am clearly an author of this research and the research findings are influenced by my prior knowledge and my life story. I selected the codes for analysing the data and I

selected how to present them, as well as which voices and views to prioritise. Nor have I been shy of considering the political dimensions of the research, despite its sociological underpinnings as *"a neutral, simple social reality that can be depicted or interpreted does not exist"* (Alvession and Sköldberg, 2009:200). But the research is also the author of the researcher. In reviewing my pilot research report (see appendix 10.3) written before my first field trip in 2017, a note there says, *"The interviews also indicated a strong link between the interviewee's professional and role identity, and the way they develop their responsibilities".* Had I known at that point just how 'strong' identities as a construct would become within the body of the research findings, and therefore my understanding of myself as a researcher, it is quite possible this research project might not have happened.

3.6 Summary

This chapter has outlined the philosophical approach supporting this interpretivist research project, in particular its social constructionist epistemology and nominalist ontology. I have explained the decisions supporting the adoption of a broad but sensitive discursive approach. The suitability of an in-depth case study for exploring the complexity of how CSR strategizing is enabled and constrained in a unique organizational setting has also been addressed. Approaches and challenges to data collection, research ethics, empirical analysis and reflexivity have also been discussed.

4: Case Background and Context

4.1 Introduction

This chapter provides an in-depth description of the case study background and context to ensure that more than *"a small tip of a large iceberg of obscurity"* (Johns, 2001:36), regarding the research site is on view to the reader. This is a partial account of the firm, influenced by my observations during research trips. Section 4.2 introduces the business and describes the company history, business approach, organizational culture and organizational identity. Section 4.3 outlines the firm's approach to CSR before Walgreens' merge with WBA in 2014, and the new CSR strategy post 2014.

4.2 Case Description

This account of the firm is drawn from documents available externally, as well as a history book about Walgreens, *Pharmacist to the Nation* (Kogan and Kogan, 1989), that I was gifted by my contacts. I also make use of a number of business and press reports. I draw on these materials for information to build a description of the case study context. This description is complemented with interviewee statements about the firm.

4.2.1 The Business

Walgreens Boots Alliance (WBA) is currently a multinational health and beauty company. Created in December 2014 from a merger between the private equity owned Alliance Boots and Walgreens in the U.S., by mid-2018 the company spanned 25 countries, boasted more than 18,500 stores (in 11 countries) and 415,000 employees. By the end of fiscal year 31 August 2018, WBA sales had reached $131.5 billion. Although Walgreens purchased the remaining 55 percent of Alliance Boots that it did not already own to establish the holding company WBA, Walgreens remained a subsidiary of WBA. Marketline (2015) described the merger as bringing:

> *...together a brand portfolio of retail, wholesale, service and product brands, along with the world's largest pharmaceutical wholesale and distribution network and will position Walgreens Boots Alliance as the world's largest buyer of pharmaceuticals. In*

addition, with its equity method investments, Walgreens Boots Alliance has a retail pharmacy network spanning the U.S. and Europe as well as key markets in Latin America and Asia, with growth opportunities in many developing and underserved markets across the world.

This case study pertains only to Walgreens in the U.S. because although an ongoing process of globalization of WBA's CSR endeavours is underway, Walgreens' CSR in the U.S. is implemented by executive and middle managers headquartered in Deerfield, Chicago. In 2017, Walgreens was listed as one of the top five pharmacy chains in the U.S. Before its merge with Alliance Boots, according to a 2015 Marketline report,[17] Walgreens recorded revenues of $76,392 million in the financial year ended August 2014, an increase of 5.8 percent over 2013. The same report quotes the operating profit of the company as $4,194 million for 2014, an increase of 6.4 percent over 2013. The net profit was $1,932 million in FY2014, a decrease of 21.1 percent compared to FY2013. According to MarketLine, Walgreens is:

...one of the largest drugstore chains in the U.S. with an extensive store network. As of August 2014, approximately 76 percent of the U.S. population lived within five miles of a Walgreen store and an average of 6.2 million shoppers visited the company's stores daily in FY2014. Additionally, Walgreen has the highest number of stores compared to its key competitors, CVS Health and Rite Aid. As of August 31, 2014, the company operated 8,309 locations in 50 states, the District of Columbia, Puerto Rico and US Virgin Islands. In comparison, as of December 31, 2013, CVS Health operated 7,660 retail drugstores. On the other hand, Rite Aid operated 4,587 stores in 31 states across the U.S. and in the District of Columbia as of March 1, 2014. Strong retail network allows Walgreen to serve a broad base of customers. In FY2014, the company filled approximately 699 million prescriptions.[18]

According to Wikipedia, Walgreens was at 31 August 2018, America's second largest pharmacy retail chain after CVS, with a total 9,560 stores and a presence in all 50 states.

4.2.2 Company History

Walgreens was a family-founded and family-run company until the 1970s. Established in 1901, Walgreens was founded when Charles R. Walgreen Sr. bought out his employer and set up under his own name in Chicago's south side. He became a registered pharmacist, mixing and

[17]Company Profile - Walgreen Co, MarketLine (formerly Datamonitor), 9 Jan 2015, REFERENCE CODE: 677870BB-5E8C-4002-8197-6193F34D8E92.
[18] Ibid:4

packaging his own drugs. By 1925, C.R. Walgreen Sr. had more than 65 stores and had expanded to Milwaukee, St. Louis and Minneapolis. The company went public two years later, and at the time of the Great Depression Walgreens had more than 500 stores from New York to Florida. During the 1930s, the company while tightly wedded to its pharmacy positioning, expanded its fountain offering and restaurant services, and opened the first superstores in U.S. retail history in Miami, including one with a two-way high-speed escalator, which according to Walgreens' history book was *the "first of its kind in a drug store anywhere in the world"* (Kogan and Kogan, 1989:171). At this time Walgreens also opened numerous cigar booths.

In 1941, the Walgreens' board approved the C.R. Walgreen Sr. memorial Pension Trust following the death of C.R. Walgreen Sr. and the taking up of the company presidency by his son Charles Walgreen, Jr. The 1940s saw the purchase of new stores and remodelling old ones to fit the super store model. Of significance was the purchase of a super store on the corner of Michigan and Chicago Avenues in Chicago downtown. In this decade Walgreens also bought the Mexican retail restaurant chain Sanborns which it retained until 1980s when it was sold because of the devaluation of the Mexican peso. In 1952, Walgreens opened its second self-service store in Chicago. The success of the self-service model changed the firm's business operations thereafter (Kogan and Kogan, 1989:203). Although the number of stores only increased in the 1950s from 410 to 451, the square footage of sales and product space afforded by the self-service retail style increased sales from $163 million in 1950 to $312 million by the end of the decade (Kogan and Kogan, 1989:210). In 1960, Walgreens opened its first store in Puerto Rico, and its first super centre in 1964 (as part of the purchase of Globe-Danburg), a drug store of 31,500 square feet. By 1969 it had 17 super centres. The 1960s also witnessed innovations with food retailing with 287 grills opening within Walgreens' stores in addition to 14 Corky's and two Robin Hood restaurants. In 1969, 22 million prescriptions were filled, sales were worth $672 million and earnings $12.1 million.

By 1985 the company had 1,100 drug stores in 28 States, placing it fourth in the industry behind Revco, Jack Eckerd and Rite Aid. After disinvesting of some of its food services in the mid1980s, a program of expansion through acquisitions led Walgreens in 1986 to acquire the MediMart chain from Stop & Shop with some 66 more stores. By 2006, Walgreens acquired the Happy Harry's chain in Delaware, Pennsylvania, Maryland and New Jersey. In October 2007, Walgreens opened its 6,000th store in New Orleans, Louisiana.

4.2.3 Business Approach

Walgreens' main business model for growth since its inception was to focus on increasing volume of sales, increasing profits by increased product movement and spreading of fixed and semi-fixed costs. In the early decades, continuous expansion of its suite of stores was premised on careful selection of store locations to maximise footfall. By the end of 1920s this approach had won the company several commendations by powerful investment institutions. For instance, a leading New York investment house, John Nickerson and Company, issued a report citing Walgreens as *"the most progressive and fastest growing drug chain in the country"* and summing up, *"We believe the Walgreen Company to be an outstanding enterprise in the chain store field, endowed with an exceptionally capable and aggressive management"* (Kogan and Kogan, 1989:113). In 1948, as operating costs began to rise, and profit margins were squeezed, Walgreen Jr. noted *"We believe that maintenance of sales volume is essential to our continued success, which we will endeavour to accomplish by aggressive merchandising, at the same time exercising careful expense control,"* (Kogan and Kogan, 1989:189). Control over operational costs is a feature of many retail companies, where in the 21st century these companies operate on small profit margins maximized through large quantity sales. Walgreens appears to be no exception in this regard, as two interviewees described:

> *"We're a relatively lean company. We have to make hard decisions about what we're going to support... so, at this company, I don't think there is much that gets through that isn't aligned. Of course, there are little things here and there, but for the most part, I don't see a lot of activity that gets through that isn't pretty clearly aligned." [M63]*

> *"...it's a very, I guess, economically run company, so they're very careful about not over spending, but they're also very careful about spending and doing more things that gets them in the right direction towards the right priorities and initiatives. And it's been that way since I've been here which includes working under three different CEOs." [M23]*

In addition to increasing sales volume and implementing a lean operations model, Walgreens from the outset was an enthusiastic advertiser. In 1924 annual company spending on advertising was $84,141. In 1929 that had risen to $904,595, and by 1933 it was over $1 million. The favoured format was *"newspaper copy packed with facts about merchandise and prices that will bring people into the stores"* (Kogan and Kogan, 1989:103). As profit margins reduced in 1970s, Walgreens response was to launch *"an aggressive central discount pricing system,*

promoted with heavy advertising" though increases to sales volume did not apparently offset lower gross profits at the time (Kogan and Kogan, 1989:244). Reduced margins in retail since the 1980s have been paralleled by reduced margins on prescriptions, so although the company coming into the 21st century year-on-year reports increased volume of retail sales and filled prescriptions, the margin and profits have reduced. Walgreens has been especially affected by changes in regulation as regards prescriptions. In 2013, industry experts predicted that US drug manufacturers would:

> *"…face significant risks from a trend toward a more controlled approach to the operation of pharmacy benefit networks (PBNs) that deliver medicines to patients. Instead of letting patients choose to fill their prescriptions from an open network that includes a wide range of pharmacies, these benefit designs use financial incentives or explicit restrictions to direct consumers to specific pharmacies that agree to meet the PBN's conditions. […] Payers' use of the more tightly controlled pharmacy network model will keep growing as they seek additional drug spending savings."*[19]

Unlike its main competitor CVS, Walgreens does not have its own PBN and as a result Walgreens ability to make profit from filled prescriptions has declined. As one interviewee said, "*we've had a very tough business environment, we're transforming our business. The competitive landscape is fierce, our business model is dying, and it has to be re-invented" [M33]*. Consequently, for the first quarter of 2019 Bloomberg reported, *"At its pharmacy counters, the source of two-thirds of its U.S. sales, Walgreens filled more prescriptions but was hurt by smaller reimbursements from insurers. Meanwhile, same-store retail sales fell 3.8 percent in the quarter as shoppers picked up fewer cold remedies and tobacco products."*[20] In April 2019, Bloomberg also reported that *"Walgreens' U.S. business is 'under siege',"* stating that the quarterly results to March 2019 *"were worse than even pessimistic investors imagined. Pessina said on a conference call with analysts that Walgreens management saw the trends coming but wasn't quick enough in putting countermeasures in place."*[21]

[19] Pharmaceutical Executive Editors, Pharmaceutical Executive, The Big Squeeze, Pharma.Exec.com, 1 May 2013. [Retrieved from http://www.pharmexec.com/big-squeeze, last accessed 10.05.2019]

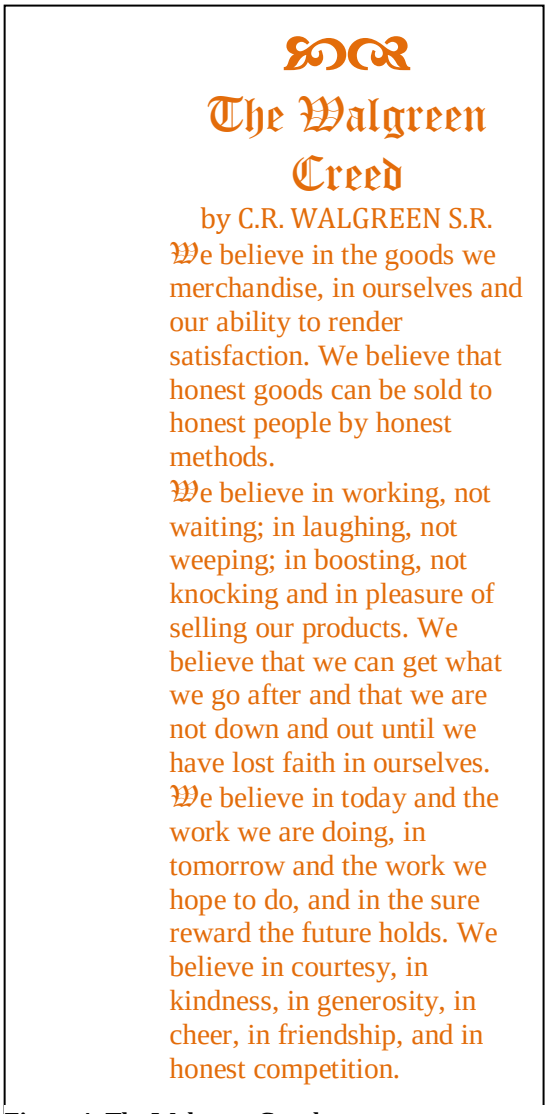
[20] Bloomberg, 3 April 2019, "Walgreens CEO Loses $1.2 Billion in One Day", by Robert Langreth and Sophie Alexander. [Retrieved from https://www.bloomberg.com/news/articles/2019-04-03/walgreens-ceo-pessina-loses-1-2-billion-on-pharmacy-wipeout, last accessed 10.05.2019]

[21] Ibid.

In addition to decreasing profit margins, Walgreens has experienced a number of large scale corporate legal scandals. In its SWOT analysis of Walgreens in 2015, Marketline highlighted as a weakness the firm's involvement in various legal disputes. Marketline noted that *"Involvement in such litigations not only harms the company's brand image but also erodes consumer confidence in its products. In addition, the damages paid are substantial and are counterproductive"* (Marketline, 2015). Some examples of major legal disputes are outlined in appendix 10.9. Adding to Walgreens' woes, new research by the federal Food and Drug Administration (FDA)[22] in 2019, who inspected 6,350 Walgreens stores, found 22 percent selling tobacco to minors. Bloomberg who covered the story reported Walgreens had been fined 240 times since 2010 for such violations.

4.2.4 Organizational Culture

According to Walgreens' history book *Pharmacist to the Nation* by Kogan and Kogan (1989), the firm's success is attributable in large part to the cultivation of a culture in which the customer is always right. In an acceptance speech for a business award as one of the five best managed companies in 1985, C.R. Walgreen III is reported saying: *"Walgreens is not 36,000 people serving more than a million customers a day. It's one employee serving one customer in one store. The way we do that today and tomorrow will determine whether we can stay at the top of our industry"* (Ibid:277).


The Walgreen Creed

by C.R. WALGREEN S.R.

We believe in the goods we merchandise, in ourselves and our ability to render satisfaction. We believe that honest goods can be sold to honest people by honest methods.

We believe in working, not waiting; in laughing, not weeping; in boosting, not knocking and in pleasure of selling our products. We believe that we can get what we go after and that we are not down and out until we have lost faith in ourselves.

We believe in today and the work we are doing, in tomorrow and the work we hope to do, and in the sure reward the future holds. We believe in courtesy, in kindness, in generosity, in cheer, in friendship, and in honest competition.

Figure 4: The Walgreen Creed
(Reproduced from Kogan and Kogan, 1989)

The Walgreens' history book describes how in the early decades, customer focus was achieved by developing the psychology of the store manager as an independent retailer, responsible for the store and its sales growth. Central to the company ethos was the Walgreen Creed (see Figure 4). This was followed by other organizational texts for sales employees telling them how to do *"little things in the right way"* (Ibid:136). In the 1930s a hard cover book was issued titled *Set*

[22] Retrieved from: https://www.bloomberg.com/news/articles/2019-02-07/fda-targets-walgreens-as-biggest-violator-of-youth-tobacco-sales [last accessed 22/3/2019]

Your Sales for Bigger Earnings. This book offered suggestions on how to improve one's qualities of *"helpfulness, fairness, honesty, truthfulness, loyalty, faithfulness, industry and efficiency"*. To sell one's personality, Walgreens' history book of 1989 describes sales staff as also being advised to use tact and courtesy, be clear eyed and an abundance of energy, to exercise regularly, bathe frequently, to have good appearance by standing straight, and have shoes shined and fingernails cleaned. Behaviourally employees were advised not to stare and to express *real* sympathy. In the 1950s, a new directive established to emphasize doing *"things the right way"*. It was called *'The Four Way Test'*, and its tenets were, (1) Is it the Truth? (2) Is it Fair to all concerned? (3) Will it build Good Will and Better Friendship? (4) Will it be Beneficial to all concerned? (see Figure 5). Described as *"a prescription for living"*, it was essentially aimed at the cadre of new store managers rising in the Walgreens' expanding employee ranks. During my field visit the discourse of 'doing the right thing' featured in numerous interviewee statements. In line with Silverman (2006), I refer to this as a 'doing the right thing' repertoire (see Table 1).[23]

Interview statements illustrating 'doing the right thing' repertoire
"I work for a good ethical company that wants to do the right thing. It was funny, one of our lawyers… I think it was his 25th or his 30th anniversary […] and you have to say something about the company […] he said very simply, he goes: 'I have been blessed to work for an ethical company that wants to do the right thing'. [M61]
"So, I think we've always done the right thing and then again having my husband be in the stores I've seen a lot of the work that comes out of the stores first hand, a lot of the volunteer work and a lot of the community activism that they do. So, we've always done the right thing." [M21]
"For years the ladder was doing the right thing. Corrective action. A noble good. Correcting a social wrong." [M91]
"I've got to know the people who actually run our company and they've been finding people who want to do the right thing for their customers, their employees and their shareholders […]. The intent is always to treat people fairly, compete well and do it the right way. So, no qualms there. I'm really proud of that." [M61]
"So back to kind of this remit, so basically it's really a compass at a very high level, it's what we called in the past 'doing the right thing' […] And more and more companies like Black Rock look at the type of work companies do for mission and purpose, you know, not just green energy, but just doing the right thing."[M93]
"What I am really proud of as a Walgreens employee is that our commitment is not just at surface level. We are doing it because we can say that we did, but we are doing it because it is the right thing to do and it makes business sense."[M63]

Table 1: 'Doing the right thing' repertoire

[23] An interpretive repertoire is a broad discourse used to define identity and moral status, that may be invoked differentially (Silverman 2006:226-227).

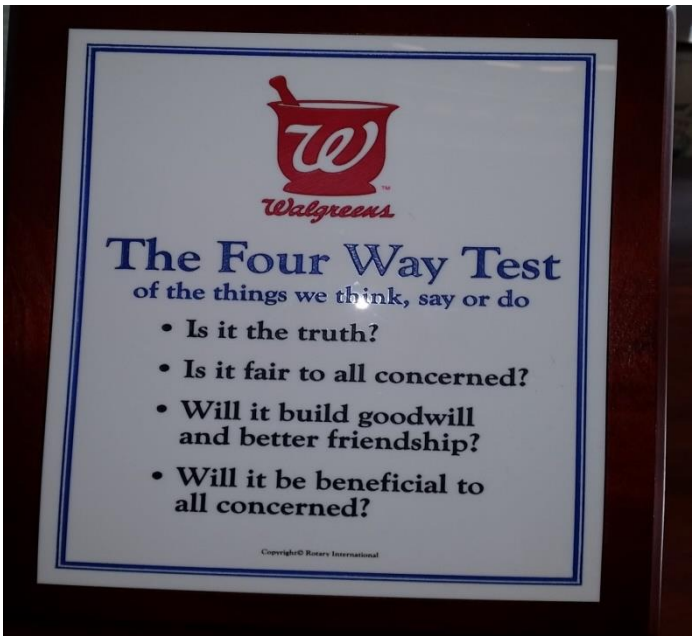


Figure 5: Photo of a copy of Walgreens' *'The Four Way Test'*, Deerfield 2017

4.2.5 Organizational Identity

Walgreens' history book by Kogan and Kogan (1989) is an artefact itself carrying the title *Pharmacist to the Nation*, symbolically positioning the firm at the heart of American culture. Its roots in the trusted pharmacist figure, stemming from C.R. Walgreen's Sr. training as a pharmacist, were reflected in early advertising slogans highlighting the trusted pharmacist figure: *"Drugs with a Reputation"* (Ibid:72). Also, in the early days, C.R. Walgreen Sr. focused on the firm identity as a beauty destination. For example, in the 1920s the firm advertised Lemon Facialax, Kleenex Cold cream Remover and Boncilla Beautifier urging their use *"For Beauty's Sake"* (Ibid:76). In the 1947 year-end stockholders' report Charles Walgreen Jr. stated that *"No matter how our stores develop in size or broaden in character, the prescription department still remains the heart of our business..."* (Ibid:183). The iconic role of the pharmacist was also reflected in company leaders beyond the founders: *"Mr. George, Dan George, was our first non-Walgreen Chairman, CEO, and he grew up here. He started as a pharmacist here. And the values and the culture of the company, were, I think very engrained in Mr. George" [M61]*. One research participant described the company's identity:

"Because Walgreens, I remember when I interviewed here one of the people that I worked with talked about how, because she worked with Walgreens for about 15 years and she talked about how proud they are of the big 'W' on the corner. And when you came here you definitely got a sense you know, many of the people worked here because it was a family run company. It was part of the American fabric. It was sort of an iconic American pharmacist, and you got that, and Walgreens definitely saw themselves like that." [M70]

Walgreens' identity as a pharmacy business is reflected in the construction of an identity as medical counsellor to customers. The fountain offering in the 1910s was for example premised on the notion that bottled soda water was a health aid. Walgreens' official advertising newsletter *Pepper Pod* first issued in 1919 when the firm had just 19 stores, not only published price lists but counsel on how to cure or prevent a range of health troubles. To ward off criticism from physicians about encroachment of their functions, Pepper Pod advised: *"As purveyors of health-giving merchandise, we feel it within our sphere to disseminate knowledge as to natural, or we might say, common sense measures of maintaining health"* (Ibid:57). Over the years the role of medical counsel became more ambitious, with some in the present-day describing Walgreens as a life line: *"There might be somebody in a chronic condition who sees their corner Walgreens (thank God that's not me), that sees their corner Walgreens as literally their life line. They know the hours of operation, they know when they can go" [M52]*. Reflective of this desire to be a recognized medical advisor a few interviewees constituted customers as 'patients', *"and Walgreens Company in healthcare impacts on patients - that's what we do every day we impact on patients every day" [M60]*. This identity as preferred medical counsellor was constructed from and around the figure of the pharmacist:

"So, family and friends in the community I grew up in Wisconsin everybody went to Walgreens. There was no question about you wouldn't go anywhere else. Everybody trusted their pharmacist. Real close relationships with their pharmacist almost more so than sometimes their doctors, they trusted the pharmacists." [M22]

In the research context, Walgreens' pharmacist ambitions were constructed through discourses of caring and helping others. Table 2 details examples of the discourse, which I refer to as a 'helping-caring' repertoire.

Interview statements showing a 'helping-caring' repertoire
"…we're not going to brag but, of course, we help these people. The big thing is if there's a flood or something, you know hundreds of our staff will show up and help. But we're always very humble…" [M72]
"…just the business that we're in, medical and healthcare, helping people get their prescription drugs as well as all the other over the counter, you know, your pain relievers, Tylenol, the bandages, all the other things that go along with why you might be in the pharmacy, in the first place. So, you know it's at the core of what we – it's at the core of what we do. Everything is built around our patient. So, the reason that we're in existence is to help those customers." [M01]
"You know, historically Walgreens was you go and pick up your medication. And now these are pharmacists that know who you are, and they take the time to talk to you about all of your medication and provide you resources. You know if you need a cane… You know, Mr. Smith there's a cane over there, let me help you get it, let me show you how to use it." [M42]
"I said the Red Cross is a little short, can a couple of your folks go when the truck gets there and help unload and volunteer. Well, a tonne of people showed up and I got this really wonderful letter that said, 'Dear Walgreens (not addressed to me), I want to let you know how much it meant to me, that you gave us a donation for our firefighters. But what really impressed me was when your people came to help us. And they unloaded the semi-trailer and they sweated along our side of people and they really made me feel that Walgreens cared about us'." [M61]
"The benefit fund at Walgreens is when one of us out of 150,000 people go through tough times economically, it can…You cannot pay the bills. Unfortunately, catastrophe happened. We come together, and we help you as a company. We actually provide you financial assistance. You fill a form, and we get a quick committee here or we do what we can do to help you out. The right thing." [M60]
"I find it quite funny when there's marketing campaigns about describing things, you know brands looking for a purpose, a reason to exist, and they make up some fantastic story about it, and people notice it's not right, it's not true. We don't have to search that, we're a pharmacy, we're a business, we're based in communities every day, we have pharmacists taking care of customers every day." [M24]

Table 2: 'Helping-caring' repertoire

4.3 CSR at Walgreens

Using interviewee data and published CSR reports, this section offers an overview of CSR at Walgreens. Sub-section 4.3.1 outlines CSR at Walgreens before 2014. Sub-section 4.3.2 offers a description of CSR at Walgreens after 2014. This overview is offered as a descriptive and partial account to support the reader's understanding of the case study context; as such it is not intended as, nor makes any claim to be, a systematic representation of CSR at Walgreens.

4.3.1 CSR before 2014

> *"I think it's… How do I say this? It's [CSR] as old as Walgreens is. It's part of the brand. From the very beginning there was this intention to make things better to help customers, to help communities and really make a difference and make money in the process. And then I think that has always, just from my 3 years being here from what I've observed, it's always been in the ethos of like our store managers and our field team members." [M72]*

Interviewees described CSR prior to 2014 as comprising three main areas: employee equality and diversity, philanthropic giving, and community work. Some interviewees referred to diversity as a traditional focus for Walgreens: *"…from our inception we've been an equal opportunity employer. There's the famous picture of Charles Walgreen standing in front of one of his stores with a um… one of his black employees and in 1901 it wasn't very common that you would see that" [M21]*. In this area of responsibility work, one interviewee also described Walgreens as a fair pay employer: *"…whether it's a history of Walgreens as providers of equal pay long before it was fashionable to do so, our founder Charles Walgreen had an equal pay clause in the 1920's when Jim Crow was the law of the land for half of American pharmacists. I have that letter in my office as a reminder" [M91]*.

During interviews for this research study, the most commented area of responsibility work prior to 2014 was philanthropic giving: *"So pre-WBA frankly I think Walgreens did a lot of very very good things. They were not necessarily so good at telling people about it. They were very humble, they gave to causes" [M30]*. Philanthropy, as well as being part of store activity, was led nationally by teams at head office: *"So we were you know supporting the big guys in terms of American Heart Association, American Diabetes Association, Juvenile Diabetes Research Foundation, Corman, American Cancer Society, all the big non-profits in America we were sponsoring because we felt like we had to because that's what you do when you care" [M71]*. Several interviewees ascribed an ad hoc nature to these giving activities: *"Because I mean there was a bit of bad prior world here, where like no matter what your cause if you were here at the support office you'd just go for it, you'd put your signs up, you'd do it" [M72]* and, *"I think before we had a couple, I would say, key partners and even honestly it's totally vague to me which ones we even partnered with. Because I think they've kind of come and gone" [M32]*. Philanthropy was seen as part of what Walgreens did: *"Walgreens was doing a little bit - a generous company, charitable by nature, and like many companies hadn't holistically looked at it" [M52]*. As well as giving as a corporation, interviewees described giving as part of the store

culture and being embedded in the community: *"There was this history, […] Right we support this because they asked us. We do an animal shelter or something. I'm making things up. But you know so like 8,000 stores and 8,000 different CSR initiatives at the extreme, right. And you know it's the cultural reasons for that are much broader than CSR" [M72]*. Store managers and employees had considerable freedom to develop projects as community relations:

> *"…to date we've had, you know, 8000ish stores and there has been varying degrees of focus on community events and community causes. And in the past there has been a roll call, a community leader that was essentially a store manager, one per subset of stores was dubbed the community leader. And it was that person's responsibility to participate, I think, in six events throughout the year and they had to do, you know organize some fund raising in store and they – it was really about how can we be more part of the community. […] if it's important to your community, it's important to you… but they had a lot of leeway, the team members did in choosing what to support and they had budget to support it." [M71]*

And to develop philanthropy in the context of community marketing:

> *"We do a lot of I would say community outreach from a local level. I know that's been encouraged over the years to have the store managers participating in local events and what not. So, I think that resonates with people that you know…. I've heard people call it 'well this one's my Walgreens'. And that's you know….they're very particular about which pharmacy they visit, and it almost becomes a personal experience." [M32]*

Community cause marketing campaigns were a feature of Walgreens philanthropic activities before the merger with Alliance Boots in 2014: *"I spent 9 years in the promotions department -- really proud of some of the accomplishments. I launched what's called The Walgreens' Wellness Bus, which we still have one that travels around the country to offer free screenings [for breast cancer] in underserved populations" [M20]*. One of the most referenced campaigns by research participants during my field trips in 2017 was 'Get a shot, Give a shot' (see Table 3). This referencing by interviewees was partly linked to WBA's receipt from the United Nations Foundation of an award for Global Leadership for private sector contributions to the United Nations' Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). The award was given for the 15

million vaccinations provided to countries in development through the joint Walgreens' and United Nations' Foundation campaign 'Get a shot, Give a shot'.

Another feature of past CSR activities that some interviewees at Walgreens' head office in Chicago also referenced was how the firm's CSR had been under publicized:

> *"Right, because it might have been there before but only a handful of people knew because they were working on it. If you didn't make an attempt to go to the corporate social responsibility page, then you wouldn't know we were doing anything. And I'm pretty confident of the 3,000 folks that we had here over the last few years most of them didn't know that we even had a corporate social responsibility website." [M43]*

4.3.2 CSR post 2014

In 2014, WBA's executive managers introduced a new CSR strategy, providing rich research potential on how CSR strategies are appropriated, enacted and sustained. The new CSR strategy (see Figure 7 overleaf) was introduced to Walgreens by executive managers and was according to my contacts, based on prior company models in other parts of the business. As a public document for external and internal audiences, the new CSR strategy with its four key headings and brief statements was referred to by some research participants as both a framework and a strategy. Internally at Walgreens it was also referred to popularly as *'the four pillars'*: Marketplace, Workplace, Community, and Environment. The next interviewee statement captures the transition process from pre-2014 CSR to the post 2014:

Workplace

Objective: *To proactively support the health and wellbeing of our employees, recognizing they are our greatest advocates and assets when caring for our patients and customers in their local communities around the world.*

Objective: *To deliver our commitment to equality of opportunities across our employment practices, policies and procedures. Through diversity and inclusion, we aim to ensure that differences are recognized, understood and valued and to bring benefit to our stakeholders and the communities in which we work.*

Objective: *To reinforce our robust approach to health and safety throughout the Company, consistent with our governance structures and business processes.*

Objective: *To maintain our confidential and anonymous reporting process, ensuring that we appropriately address issues identified, while continuing to protect the identity and confidentiality of our employees and other stakeholders.*

Figure 6: Extract from WBA's CSR report, 2015:7

> *"I think we've always had a focus on CSR, but specifically having more of a strategy behind CSR which is truly communicated internally as well as externally is very new for us. We've always done a lot of great work. We don't ever talk about it with our*

customers and with just the general public ... and so we weren't getting credit for what we were doing. And so, what I see us doing now and how much it's changed is really developing a strategy, making sure everything that we're doing whether it's around volunteering or spending money in order to do things, there's a line to that strategy. And then also celebrating it: Celebrating it internally as well as with our customers and the general public in regards to what we are doing around our CSR efforts." [M50]

As an official text the CSR strategy communicated key understandings about the situated meaning of CSR. Reflecting Walgreens' history of community pharmacy, the text drew on a 'caring-helping' repertoire. Attention to the text shows that since the beginning of the merger these meanings have gradually changed. For instance, the label of 'community' appeared in both the CSR report 2015 and 2016, but the meaning was redefined. In 2015, community referred to *"meaningful multi-year partnerships with charitable organizations and other stakeholders"* and the associated text in the report stated that community priorities included *"partnerships with charitable organizations"*, and to *"develop charity programs and*

Our businesses engage in initiatives that are both relevant to their local communities and markets and fall within the central, Company-wide CSR framework. We adjusted the framework this year to define 12 CSR goals, three in each of our four focus areas. Each goal is addressed in a section of this report explaining our impact and progress in that specific area during fiscal 2016. The goals are as follows:

Community
We understand our responsibility to our neighbors and are taking actions to:
- Support the health, wellbeing and vitality of the communities we serve
- Enable young people to achieve their potential wherever they are in the world
- Develop and mobilize our resources and partnerships in the fight against cancer

Environment
To protect the earth and its resources for future generations, we understand our potential positive impact and are taking actions to:
- Reduce our energy consumption and emissions on a comparable basis* as defined by the Greenhouse Gas Protocol
- Reduce the waste we create, on a comparable basis*, and contribute to the drive for increasingly circular economies through increased re-use and recycling
- Develop plans to help achieve zero net deforestation by 2020, collaborating with other organizations in a global initiative

* Excludes the impact of acquisitions, disposals and any significant changes in existing operations

Marketplace
To compete fairly and with integrity, we are taking action to:
- Create a global process that enables transparency of ingredients and their traceability for the exclusive consumer retail product brands that we sell
- Continue to drive ethical sourcing practices – protecting human rights across our supply chain
- Work collaboratively with a global network of key external organizations engaging in issues that carry the greatest social relevance to the markets and in the communities we serve

Workplace
To treat our people with dignity and respect, we are taking action to:
- Proactively support the personal health and wellbeing of our employees
- To deliver our commitment to equal opportunities for everyone across our employment practices, policies and procedures
- Continuously improve our robust approach to health and safety, actively caring for our employees and customers, throughout the Company

Figure 7: Reproduction from WBA's CSR report, 2016:5

partnerships", and *"to support our local communities through employee volunteering"*. However, in the CSR report 2016, community was defined as *"our responsibility to our neighbors"*[24] (see Figure 7). While the concepts of partnership and cancer remained, the

[24] American spelling of original text.

concepts of community as constituting volunteering and charitable support were omitted in the CSR report 2016. Rewording 'the community' as 'neighbours' is perhaps a reflection of WBA's new position within American culture and the American stock market (Meyer and Höllerer, 2010). Equally, traditional Walgreens' symbols associated with the company's values (a commitment to 'care' and 'doing the right thing') were interwoven with the official CSR discourse. For instance, in the section on values in the WBA CSR report 2016, *"trust"* was defined as *"respect, integrity and candor guide our actions to do the right thing"* (p.3), and *"care"* was a standalone value. The repertoire of 'helping and caring' also featured in CSR reports for fiscal years 2015 and 2016 under the "workplace" heading. The CSR report 2015 committed WBA to *"proactively support the health and wellbeing of our employees, recognizing they are our greatest practitioners and assets when caring for our patients and customers"* (see Figure 6). The CSR report 2016 (see Figure 7) modified these statements, changing it to, *"to treat our people with dignity and respect we are taking action to…"* (CSR report, 2016).

The following interview excerpt from one CSR practitioner illustrates how the official CSR strategy was appropriated locally at Walgreens:

> *"… the whole strategy drives those four pillars. And it – I think WBA as a whole has a strong strategy, but then Walgreens, I think community is the biggest drive for Walgreens' strategy at the moment because there just bigger initiatives, and actually these initiatives tie in a lot to the employees. So… the engagement piece there is, I think, much stronger than some of the other areas. You know when you, when you talk to people about CSR they think about We Day and Red Nose, all that stuff. […] But the strategy is like three key features. So working locally and driving cure for cancer, eliminating cancer, and helping children reach their potential wherever they are in the world. So that seems to be the three things that are spoken about the most in terms of strategy." [M90]*

Whereas before 2014, philanthropy was initiated by Walgreens' stores as well as head office, a key feature of the new CSR strategy as described by some interviewees was the expansion and prioritization of large-scale nationwide cause marketing campaigns (see Table 3):

"With the transformation which just occurred, it will be two years this summer, that role [community leadership] was eliminated […] People are still doing it, and they are doing it in the form of participating in community events and maybe their manager, who now has a smaller group of stores than they did in the past, or maybe one store manager is doing it, or maybe our regional vice-president is doing it, somebody is doing it, and they might participate in events or walks or, do local fundraising which we've now limited to certain times of the year when we don't have enterprise campaigns going on." [M71]

Walgreens' cause marketing campaigns	
Red Nose Day Via Red Nose Day Walgreens' employees encourage customers to donate money for charity during a specified time period (1-2 months) per year. According to Walgreens' website funds raised during Red Nose Day "*supports programs that keep children safe, healthy and educated in America and around the world"*.[25]	**Get a shot, Give a shot** For every flu vaccine administered to customers at a Walgreens' store, Walgreens donates a small sum to international organizations within the United Nations system responsible for administering a wide range of vaccines to children in lesser developed countries. For instance, Walgreens' website states that *"from 9/1/18 through 3/1/19, Walgreens donated to the United Nations Foundation $0.23 for every immunization administered, up to the maximum donation of $2,600,000"*.[26]
Vitamin Angels When customers buy vitamins at Walgreens, a percentage of sales is donated to help provide vitamins to undernourished children around the world and in the U.S. For instance, for the period 1/1/18–12/31/20 [American dates], Walgreens committed *"to donating 1 percent of participating products' retail sales to Vitamin Angels"*[27]	**Me to We** Walgreens has a partnership with ME to WE aimed at empowering people to change the world with their everyday choices. Each participating product purchased at Walgreens connects customers to a positive, life-changing impact made in a developing community overseas. Customers receive an impact code which they can track electronically.[28]

Table 3: Summary of Walgreens' cause marketing campaigns

25 Further information available at: https://rednoseday.org/impact [last accessed 16.06.19]
26 Further information available at: https://www.walgreens.com/pharmacy/immunization/hot_at_life.jsp [last accessed 16/06/19]
27 Further information available at: https://www.walgreens.com/topic/promotion/vitamin-angels.jsp?ban=EVERYONECOUNTSFY19_RNDDMI_modular_VA_042219 [last accessed 16/06/19]
28 https://www.walgreens.com/topic/promotion/we-impact-lives.jsp?ban=EVERYONECOUNTSFY19_VADMI_modular_MetoWe_090118 [last accessed 16/06/19]

5: CSR Talk and Text

5.1 Introduction

> *"The world's changing, and part of it is that through the world of CSR how do we integrate? How do we move these changes? How do we get people thinking differently because that's the way we're going to save the world." [M84]*

This chapter presents an analysis of interviewee talk illustrating how CSR practitioners appropriated CSR discourse subsequent to the introduction of a new CSR strategy at Walgreens in 2014. The data presented is drawn from two field trips in 2017. It shows how CSR practitioners discursively constructed CSR talk in ways that constituted and reproduced the organization as a morally virtuous agent, on the 'good', rather than the 'dark', side of business. The analysis shows how research participants invoked CSR discourse as a flexible resource to dignify and ennoble themselves and the workplace setting, dispelling antagonistic discourses of uncertainties or instabilities (Clarke et al., 2009; Knigths and Clarke, 2014), however oblique or opaque, as regards the moral nature and competence[29] of the organization and its key agents.

The aim of this chapter is to explore how in the case study setting CSR discourse was an object (in the sense described by Cooren et al., 2015) through which CSR practitioners constructed a preferred reality regarding the organization and those with whom they were significantly related in the workplace. The important finding is that CSR discourse, as appropriated and reproduced by research participants, was a resource from which individuals drew to construct various forms of positive identity work (Brown, 2015) and meaning making about their preferred organizational environment. The analysis shows how multiple and heterogeneous middle managers, with different formal CSR responsibilities, adopted varied discursive practices in which CSR strategizing was constituted and socially embedded as referencing a positive moral identity and a positive life world.

Following this introduction, this chapter is divided into four sections. The first section (5.2) presents an analysis of how CSR practitioners constituted CSR talk to morally protagonize the

[29] Competence is used in the sense described by Shove et al. (2012), (sub-section 2.3.3).

organization and construct idealised representations of their organization's moral purpose and of corporations more widely, as a type. The section explores statements in which positive meanings were ascribed to significant relationships, whether in the past or the present, in ways that dignified and ennobled them as ideal moral agents. In highlighting different discursive moves, the data show CSR practitioners stabilizing moral uncertainties in their workplace, and quashing actual or perceived antagonistic discourses that may foreshadow their preferred reality of the organization. The second section (5.3) explores how CSR practitioners arranged CSR talk in familiar ways (Weick, 1995) that 'othered' the firm's competitors and critics, constituting certainty of differentiation about themselves in relation to external stakeholders. Section 5.4 explores how CSR practitioners constructed material objects (text such as official stories, statements and reports) in ways that helped self-reference and objectify a preferred version of self and organizational setting as one with high moral standing in the community. As discussed in chapter 2, the focus on CSR talk and text in this chapter is underpinned by Shove et al.'s (2012) approach to practitioners as carriers of practice, and by the view that practices stabilize when connections and links develop between meaning, competence and materiality. Section 5.5 summarises the findings.

Theoretically, the findings are informed by knowledge of talk as socially embedded discourses that constitute strategy practices (Balogun et al., 2014), CSR practices (Christensen et al., 2013), social practice (Jarzabkowski, 2005), and identity work (Clarke et al., 2009). Understanding the situated nature of these dynamic elements in the research context is supported by a theoretical commitment to the knowledge that words do more than just communicate and organize normative content (Austin, 1962). Words constitute building blocks (Gee, 1999) that have consequential implications (Taylor and van Every, 2000) for organizing processes (Coupland, 2001) and strategy-making (Cooren et al., 2015).

Consistent with my methodological approach, the analysis presented in this chapter is focused on interviewee constructions through the 'whos' and the 'whats' they do with CSR talk, and its rhetorical discursive representation, not the intentions as an object (Potter, 2014). As discussed in chapter 3 and as is common to discourse analysis, I highlight discursive moves (use of particular words, metaphors or rhetorical moves) that contribute to the construction of meaning by the research participants in the context of the case study. Epistemologically, this approach helps analyse the agentive way in which *"doings and sayings"* (Schatzki, 1996:89) were constructed as facts. As expected in discourse analysis, the data presented is variable as regards content and form, while possessing some consistency in terms of the shared features (Potter and Wetherell, 1987:168). That said, none of the sub-sections is hermetically sealed, with each

offering additional sometimes overlapping insight on how research participants accomplished their statements.

The contribution these findings make is in exploring how CSR practitioners appropriate CSR talk as a flexible discursive resource for different forms of identity work (Brown, 2015). This identity work helps mitigate localised antagonistic discourses (Clarke et al., 2009), insecurities about self in the workplace setting (Knights and Clarke, 2014), and protects against identity fragmentation (Sveningsson and Alvesson, 2003). With this in mind, the findings suggest how CSR as 'aspirational talk' (Christensen et al., 2013) can be understood in some contexts as individual coping in an uncertain, complex and congested moral landscape (Knights and Clarke, 2014). The findings show also how local understandings of CSR practices were constituted by and from individual identity work that entailed in-progress narrative construction of an acceptable and ideal workplace setting.

In this chapter I focus on the situated meaning of CSR discourse as offering CSR practitioners a flexible resource for constructing an ideal reality as regards their work setting and their purpose in it. This affirmational quality of CSR discourse mattered to research participants as it enabled them to stabilize and justify association with a firm whose moral competence was, or was perceived to be, in a fluid state of discursive contestation and becoming. By showing how interviewees appropriated CSR discourse for positive identity work I provide a context for the subsequent two chapters. In chapter 6 I explore how CSR practitioners constituted CSR talk during enactment as a discourse of followership in support of the organization's main strategy discourse. In chapter 7 I explore how a moral dispute regarding continued tobacco sales by Walgreens was justified by CSR practitioners.

5.2 CSR Talk and Us

In this section I analyse how CSR practitioners assembled CSR talk to morally protagonize the organization (Golant and Sillence, 2007) and construct heterogeneous, but ideal representations of the organization's purpose and of corporations more widely. Sub-section one (5.2.1) explores data illustrating how research participants appropriated official CSR talk to construct moral certainties about the organization, its standing and its ideology. The subsequent sub-sections (5.2.2 to 5.2.4) explore interviewees' statements constituting CSR talk within taken-for-granted narrative structures and stakeholder functions (the 'whos'), in ways that recursively reproduced

their version of the ideal workplace (the 'whats'). Sub-section 5.2.2 explores how some CSR practitioners drew on CSR to construct an ideal version of the firm's history as one centering on moral fortitude. Sub-section 5.2.3 shows how interviewees appropriated CSR to construct ideal versions of the company leadership. Finally, sub-section 5.2.4 explores how interviewee statements constructed CSR talk in the context of activities with the United Nations in ways that allied the organization as a significant global humanitarian actor.

5.2.1 CSR: a 'Force for Good'

This sub-section first explores data showing how CSR practitioners appropriated CSR talk, including official discourse inviting organizational members to be a 'force for good'. Subsequently, I explore how CSR practitioners also appropriated CSR talk in ways that facilitated constructions that dignified profit maximization approaches to business ('the what'), and helped protect values and identities (the 'whos') often associated with large corporations.

5.2.1.1 What CSR Means to Us

> *Together we can be a powerful 'force for good' to secure a better world for future generations and to deliver a CSR program of which we can all be truly proud.*
>
> Executive management open letter, CSR report 2015.

Interviewee statements outlined below show how CSR discourse, in particular executive talk constituting the organization as a 'force for good', was appropriated by CSR practitioners to construct the firm as an ideal moral agent, in ways that helped discard less favourable portrayals, whether real or imagined. In this respect, analysis of the statements shows how the metaphor served as a rallying cry invoked by some research participants to reconstruct the organization (Brown, 2006), not as a large competitive profit led retail company, but as a collective movement serving a 'greater' good. The following statement offers insight into how one CSR practitioner appropriated the discourse elucidating the organization's moral standing, quashing unwanted associations of a sinister nature, such as being categorized as 'evil':

"…it's a very personal thing. So, it does bubble up to the company as a whole, so we as a company can be a 'force for good', but in order for us as a company to be a 'force for good', every individual has to embrace that, and become an individual 'force for good'. So, I think that's why it's resonated so much, it does cover the whole company, but it's something that is very personal as well. And I think too, there has been a shift, not just in Walgreens, but in the industry in general, that corporations are not viewed quite the same way that they were. I will make an exception for pharmaceutical companies are still viewed on the whole as being more evil." [M13-b]

Showing the recursive appropriation of the metaphor, another interviewee recounted how executive managers at Walgreens promoted the 'force for good' discourse during a closing speech given at a nationwide Walgreens' CSR leadership day in mid-2017. The interviewee's account notes how the discourse became reproduced as an 'unofficial' CSR tagline:

"And the executive manager ended up... the script that went out for him ended up being great, and he closed with the remarks 'We can be a 'force for good', and that's become our unofficial tag line, and now it is next fiscal year (September/October) and we're still hearing a 'force for good', a 'force for good', he said it like three times on stage." [M21-b]

The 'force for good' discourse facilitated a wide range of positive meaning making, including appropriation as a resource for rejuvenation. The statement below shows how the discourse could be constructed to affirm renewed individual moral purpose ('that charges me up') as well as organizational purpose to 'make money' in socially agreeable ways:

"I think about our executive manager when he was speaking to us earlier this year, to a group in our leadership, and he talked about, and it resonates, Walgreens as a 'force for good'. For me, as a team member that charges me up. When you think about it in those really simple to understand terms, it's a tagline that can resonate, but also it reminds me that, yes, we are here to make money, but we also have that responsibility as a corporate citizen." [M44]

CSR was not just constructed in ways that legitimized the 'good' way the business made money, but also in ways that constructed a perpetual sense of legitimation:

"I think sometimes with people it's hard to connect CSR to the business side. I think they have to be intrinsic, right, and you cannot have a business strategy that doesn't have a CSR component to it, in the sense of doing good business, but also doing good. And I think you know, as one executive manager said at the end of the CSR day in Vegas, we are a 'force for good' and I think we can make…[interruption] *…so I think a company that doesn't have a CSR strategy or doesn't have you know a cause to give back to the communities will not last."[M64]*

These statements shed light on how some interviewees appropriated the 'force for good' discourse to constitute ideal versions of the company on the right side of good. Other interview excerpts (below) also show how some CSR practitioners invoked CSR to construct versions of themselves as working in a morally ideal workplace with like-minded colleagues. The construction of a collective setting of likeminded employees following a similar mission shows how some CSR practitioners appropriated CSR to constitute a sense of an ideal shared experience (Robichaud et al., 2004:622). They also appropriated CSR in ways that helped establish differentiation from others (Rank, 1983 [1932]). For instance, the following interviewee's statement includes phrases like bringing 'people into the fold'. Reminding us how Searle explains individuals as fitting the 'world-to-mind' (2008), the interviewee constructs in this statement a reality in which she 'knows' others (the 'who') hold likeminded views and speaks on their behalf as loving CSR (the 'what') as much as she does. This research participant also constructed CSR in a way that offers spiritual meaning, being 'bigger than yourself', not disempowered or insignificant, and being 'proud', not unknown or undignified:

"…being a part of these two programmes within Walgreens' is literally feeling that you are part of something which is bigger than yourself. And when you are able to lead those initiatives and bring people with you into the fold that feel the same way, that have the same sentiment towards it that, almost love it just like you love it, it's such a proud moment." [M50]

Constituting CSR talk to dispel negative anxieties and construct ideal versions of the work setting and individual purpose in it was further illustrated in the following interviewee's statement:

"Imagine coming in here and doing like task after task after task, task after task. I have the opportunity to make a difference, to make a difference for people here, and in… So, they can protect themselves through getting an immunisation, but also through this initiative they can also feel good because they're making a difference. So, I feel like I'm making a difference. I'm helping others make a difference, and then at the same point in time helping protect others both here and abroad." [M20]

Anxieties about how others perceive and judge us may be all the more acute in firms frequently in the public eye. The statement below shows how one interviewee invoked CSR to offer others a more ideal version of the organization. Poignant is the way the interviewee's statement constitutes CSR talk in the first-person plural 'we' to confirm 'we're doing the right thing', helping to stabilize individual and collective fears of an antagonist identity of 'evil enemy':

"But really the more important piece is that I can tell people 'hey we're doing the right thing', and we're making strides towards being a very very responsible company [...] Like, whether it's friends outside of the company, or whether its co-workers that I interact with if I'm on a project with them. You know it's nice to show that 'hey we're doing the right thing', maybe they weren't aware of it... I think it builds some pride in the company as well…because, you know there's certain people that look at a big corporation sometimes and it's like this big evil enemy, right. You know, this big corporation out there." [M11]

Another statement shows how CSR could be constructed in ways that facilitated disassociations with the identity of a 'big box retailers':

"Whereas they [the customer] *might think… these chain stores, we buy things there, the money goes elsewhere. They're a big box retailer and they're everywhere. But for the actions of my [CSR] team mates, that person and hopefully the people in that community, now know we're here, we're invested, we're part of you. And once you get to there, I think it has all sorts of wonderful implications…" [M61]*

CSR talk, and in particular executive CSR talk of Walgreens as a 'force for good', offered CSR practitioners a language on which they could build ideal affirmations of self and individual

purpose in the workplace setting. The data show how such affirmational CSR talk (denoted with words such as 'love', 'wonderful', and 'feel good') dematerialised anxieties and uncertainties (however momentarily) as regards who individuals thought they may be, how they ought to live and how they are perceived by others (Brown, 2015; Knights and Clarke, 2014). Regardless of the differing areas and levels of responsibilities they had for CSR work, many interviewees drew on CSR as a discursive resource to construct positive self-meanings (Brown, 2015). One interviewee elucidated: *"For me, what it means is that I am engaged in a pursuit of something that betters people's lives every day. And that is fundamentally different than what a lot of others are able to do" [M91],* and, *"For me, I'm really proud that I get to work as a CSR leader for the company because I know the company is doing amazing things, and I want to be part of it, I'm always proud to be part of it"[M74].* Another added: *"I think you'd be foolish not to recognize where there is opportunity and issues that you should really be part of to try and make better" [M30];* and, *"So for me, I take this personal and I'm probably the biggest believer, I'm very responsive to the CSR team" [M60].*

5.2.1.2 Our Meaning of CSR

As some interviewee statements above show, external and internal discourses denigrating business as bad or morally moribund can be a source of concern for some individuals closely connected to corporations and corporate values. In the context of the case study research, a discourse analysis helps explore how CSR practitioners appropriated broad and ambiguous understandings of CSR that facilitated a recalibration of business ideology, purpose and values. The previous sub sub-section focused on how CSR practitioners constructed CSR talk in ways that affirmed the organization and their moral purpose in it. This sub sub-section focuses on the construction of CSR for affirming business ideology, and constituting local CSR discourse within existing business understandings. The following executive manager's statement provides a starting point:

> *"And I think that is CSR, I think it's about building a sustainable business, taking care of other people's interests, individually and collectively as well as being able to generate a business that can invest back in itself to sustain itself going forward. To me that's CSR."*

Offered as a definition, this statement obscures the meaning of CSR. The word 'sustainability' could, for instance, be replaced by the word 'profitability', and the statement 'taking care of other people's interests,' could be understood to refer to fellow managers, shareholders, employees or none of these. This type of ambiguous construction constituting CSR meanings within existing understandings associated with profit maximization aided discursive affirmations of the pre-eminence of business understandings and know-how. The following two interviewees' statements show how CSR practitioners could construct CSR in ways that ennobled the business cause, appearing to reduce individual anxiety about business' moral legitimacy for which they might have otherwise apologised:

> *"One thing too is it's okay to say, 'we're doing good and we're out helping this organization, but also we're doing this because it helps us out strategically from a relationship piece, from tying in our specialty business or helping partner with vendors, like with Save the World', and saying, 'yes, we're doing this to help end childhood poverty and it's okay, we're having fun with our customers and we're engaging them and bringing them in and they happen to spend more money with us too.' I think we're not apologetic about being strategic around it." [M44]*

> *"So, where you know [the business] is going to focus their [CSR] effort is going most likely be in areas that will also have a positive financial impact either directly or indirectly over a long period of time. I don't think that's a bad thing in fact I think it's a good thing. It's that old phrase you know 'no margin no mission'." [M70]*

As discussed in chapter 2 (sub-section 2.2.4), the influential CSR shared value, or win-win discourse (also termed 'strategic CSR', see Porter and Kramer, 2006 and 2011), has been criticised by some scholars of simplicity and promoting continued profit maximization without significant adaptation to business models or behaviours (Crane et al., 2014). In the context of this case study, CSR talk by CSR practitioners constituting CSR within a wider business profit maximization discourse seemed to facilitate quick and favourable renderings of what it meant to be 'good': "*so again it starts to seem like our strategy as a company is to do 'good', and how do we define 'good'? We define it with CSR" [M21]*. Statements below also show how appropriating a win-win discourse, or a discourse unobservant of the contested nature of CSR, facilitated constructions that safeguarded prevailing local business understandings:

"I remember watching […] this debate on like does CSR matter verses just shareholder return. And I thought it was a very silly debate. Because to me they're not conflicting, they're actually complimentary if done right. […] I look at CSR as it needs to be good for shareholders too. […] I mean it should be right for society and it should drive good impacts. But there needs to be some sort of commercial benefit, because if you don't have the commercial benefit it's very hard to make it sustainable." [M72]

"I think for me it's [CSR] leveraging the connections, the relationships and being able to help others, you know achieve their cause or continue to further the cause somebody is passionate about. And it's interesting while doing that is also doing good business at the same time. So, it not only has an impact personally on feeling better, and feeling inspired, and feeling engaged, but it's also doing good business. The outcomes they continue to grow and develop the company, so the company continues to give back at the same time, right." [M64]

These two interview extracts show CSR being constituted in reductive ways, confined to existing localised understandings available in the workplace. CSR was described as 'helping others achieve their cause' so that people can 'feel better', and as being 'about long-term shareholder value'. Discursively the inward focus of these statements is noticeable, as is the absence of constructs involving society, the environment, or CSR as a more general engagement tool beyond the boundary of the organization.

5.2.2 CSR Is 'in Our DNA'

In this sub-section, I explore data showing how some CSR practitioners constructed CSR talk in ways that helped constitute idealised versions of the firm's past (the 'what') and its past leaders (the 'whos'). In particular, data show how some interviewee statements melded CSR discourse with organizational repertoires of helping and caring and 'doing the right thing' (see sub-section 4.2.5), constituting CSR with a sense of permanency. In this respect some discursive fragments explored in this sub-section bear a narrative quality of romanticism, as interviewees discursively revived and arranged old symbols to craft their ideal structural environment in the present. By recursively reiterating old company identity symbols in the context of the new CSR talk, CSR practitioners appropriated CSR discourse within a localised repertoire of accepted meanings (as

seen in sub sub-section 5.2.1.2). The following interviewee's reference to 'this caring, helping thing' and the choice of the word 'foreign' shows this pattern:

> "*I think it's who we are. I mean whether, with all of the natural disasters of the United States, even the current ones when I've come here, we are part of the first responders in this country. Whether it's the Red Cross coming to us, the National Guard, the federal government because we get food, water where it needs to be. That's just been a part of this company forever. So, I don't know, it's hard to describe because it's in the DNA of the Walgreens' culture of this caring, helping thing. Whether it's our pharmacists for the patients that come into our pharmacies, whether it's Vitamin Angels, 'Give a Shot, Get a Shot', any of these things, none of them are foreign, Red Nose Day, to what we're about." [M33]*

In combining the past and the present, this speaker stabilized a favoured version of the organization. Interviewees accomplished this stabilization of their version of the firm's moral standing in different ways, but by drawing on existing understandings. For example, in the next statement, CSR discourse was linked to past value symbols such as trust, health and happiness and historically located with the company foundation:

> *"…when I look at where we've been and where we're going, I don't have any disagreement with it* [the CSR strategy]. *So, I'm looking at the pieces – community, environment, marketplace and workplace – I feel like there is a good balance there. And I think the other piece too is that the flexibility remains so that when there's a moment of need and you build up this brand … Part of building up your brand and championing everyone's right to be happy and healthy, being trusted, being around since 1901 for Walgreens … You build that brand up." [M44]*

Constructing CSR as equating with past value symbols (for example mottos and mission statements), was one way of discursively embedding certainty into individual versions of the organization. Another way was by combining CSR talk with positive constructions of past company leaders:

> *"It's interesting because our take at CSR at Walgreens is influenced obviously by WBA's, but it's always been 'doing things the right way', which is to say that you do things the way that you would… that the social morals and the standards of the areas in which you operate expect you to. You hold yourself to a higher standard overall, but it's doing business 'the right way'. I think it comes from… at least on the Walgreens' side, the fact that Mr. Walgreen wanted us 'to do things the right way'." [M61]*

Invoking the company founder in the context of present day CSR talk to construct in-progress narratives about the organization's past moral fortitude featured in several interviewee statements: *"I think it's [CSR] always been in our DNA to help our team members and to help the community, at least as long as I've been here […]. It's always been ingrained in what we do as a company, we read in the history about that all the way back to 1901, with Charles R. Walgreen" [M14].* We know from narrative scholars, that in a desire to script preferred realities, individuals tend to draw on narrative forms that become over-embellished and sometimes fantastical (Brown, 2006; Gabriel, 1999). In this vein, one CSR practitioner constructed an image of the company founder as a modern-day environmentalist, forgetting perhaps that at that time vehicles powered by internal combustion engines hardly existed:

> *"…from our inception we've been an equal opportunity employer. There's the famous picture of Charles Walgreen standing in front of one of his stores with a um… one of his black employees and in 1901 it wasn't very common that you would see that. So, you know, we can say that from our roots we've been doing the right thing, we've been an equal opportunity employer um… you could argue that they made their deliveries on bikes, so they were being environmentally friendly, you know." [M21]*

These statements drawing from past symbols of Walgreens' values, including romanticized images of founders, illustrate how interviewees constructed CSR talk to sustain an idealized version of their organization and its key actors. In this world CSR was constructed not as a new moral commitment, but confirmation of a persistent and enduring moral intention, an in-built morality. To these research participants CSR appeared to be a matter of business character not managerialist faddism as some scholars of CSR have claimed (Zorn and Collins, 2007). The statements also show how identity work that forged CSR talk with historical symbols of Walgreens' past confined the meanings that could be constituted from CSR to understandings offered in past definitions and meaning categories, circumventing potential for CSR to be appropriated as a discourse of new meanings.

5.2.3 Our Leaders Are Serious

In this sub-section I explore data illustrating how some research participants' statements drew on executive involvement in CSR developing constructs that constituted leadership (the 'who') in positive and ideal ways (the 'what'). For instance, in the following interviewee's statement a moral claim is constructed that current company leaders gave up profit opportunity and gave back profits (to employees and communities) that otherwise would have gone to shareholders:

> *"…and to know that the company also takes some of their profit or profit opportunity and not only turns it back over to their shareholders for monetary dividends but invests it in these opportunities to give back to employees and communities and environment I think speaks to the importance that CSR and doing the right thing has for the executive leadership." [M23]*

In one example, one research participant constructed executive involvement in CSR in ways that helped constitute the firm leaders as caring: *"I have to say, it's nice that it comes from the top. It's nice to know that […] there's a committee made up of the most important people in our company that review this information. They go over it, they care about it" [M61]*. As well as intelligent: *"The leadership […], on that CSR top committee…[...], all the rest of those folks, when they said this is how we're going to go about doing it, I think they were really smart" [M61]*. Some research participants' statements construed leadership involvement in CSR in ways that facilitated constructions of leaders as morally more committed and humane:

> *"I think that it's huge that they participate. It makes others want to participate, they see their leaders doing it [CSR], and they want to participate and feel like they can participate. And back in the [name removed] era, who was before [the current executives] there was not, there was not executive commitment to do CSR responsibilities." [M42]*

> *"It's nice when leaders show up to those [CSR] events, to see them in person. And everyone was really great because they really inter-mingled with you know… Anyone*

could go up to them and they were probably selfied out because people were taking selfies with them. But they were just part of the team during that whole week, so it was nice." [M53]

Another interviewee drew on the volume of official CSR talk and announcements by executive leaders to reify a construction of the firm's leaders as serious and committed:

"...especially a lot of the leadership they all talk very much the same way about like how you know we want to do the right thing, we're here for the customers, you know we're here for our communities and everything like that. So, I think that's excellent. I think it shows that you know they are serious about it because they talk about it all the time." [M90]

In this way some CSR practitioners assembled CSR talk in ways that enabled a favourable discourse regarding the moral character of the leaders they followed, constituting them as better (than others), not doing CSR for managerialist reasons, but because they meant it: *"they're not just doing what we're told by WBA" [M21]*, and: *"there's no law that says you have to recycle, there's no law that says you have to do these things, it's something that our leadership has said is important to us and that alone makes me proud to be doing it" [M30]*. These constructs are reminiscent of Gabriel and Hirschhorn's (1999) observation that followers sometimes construct leaders as someone who is accessible and helps achieve illusions. Reminding us of the polyphonic nature of organizational discourses and the extent to which these positive constructions were contested, belonging only to their author, the following research participant's statement constructs a different reality as regards leadership involvement in CSR:

"...it's not as bad as it used to be, but a lot of times if there's somebody in the C suite, so to speak, that has a heart for a particular organization or disease state a lot of time that gets pushed down to us to, you know, help create relationships or do programmes with. And when you do that then somebody else has to suffer, changes in policy and direction of the company tends to affect what we've done in the past. It's you know, it's the nature of the beast. The mantra in a lot of our departments is you just have to get comfortable with change, so you just roll with what's coming. And if they change their mind on something, I mean Red Nose Day may not be here next year, okay, so what's

next? What are we going to do to drive sales? So I try not to think too much about the politics and what goes on." [M43]

5.2.4 We Are Globally Significant

In questing for a goal, protagonists often rely on helpers and allies (Silverman, 1993). In this respect, data analyses show how some CSR practitioners constructed the firm's work on the United Nations' SDGs[30] in ways that allied Walgreens with a significant global humanitarian actor. There is of course nothing unusual about WBA's efforts to link its CSR work to the SDGs, this is a favoured approach. However, for the purpose of this research project, the object of interest is the discursive construction of the CSR relationship with the UN in ways that helped establish preferred meanings about the scale and impact of the firm in social realms. For example, one interviewee said: *"we have now taken the steps to further align to the UN SDGs, that gives us a lot of specific direction and you know exactly what is it that we are prioritising and what is it that the rest of the world is prioritising so that we can support those same goals and priorities," [M21].* In the following excerpt, another interviewee allied the SDGs with religious values in a way that helped constitute superior moral meaning and a version (however momentary) of companies as aspiring toward 'ending world hunger, ending poverty':

"I mean I don't know what religion you are, or if you really believe in a religion, or whatever it might be, but I read those [commandments] and people get all upset about them, and I'm like well which one is not a good idea? I mean they're all pretty good ideas to live by. Don't kill people, honour people, treat people the right way. And that's kind of how I think about business and SDGs. There's nothing in there that's not a good idea, ending world hunger, ending poverty, doing these types of things, an individual can do so much, but companies can do so much more." [M30]

Constructing alliances with significant global stakeholders also facilitated discursive constructions constituting the organization as a superior actor, an organization 'up' there, and a member of a globally important social group:

[30] See WBA's CSR reports 2016 and 2017.

"The other thing that's interesting, is I think partially through strategic, partially just through serendipity, all of the work does link up to the UN Strategic Development Goals. You know the SDGs, and it's interesting because they're all interconnected. So, we do this work with the UN, 'Get a shot, Give a shot', so that's with the UN. And then Richard Curtis is the guy who started Red Nose Day, and he actually works closely with the UN, he actually helped create the SDGs, so all of this stuff lines up to them, right." [M72]

The following interviewee statement shows how positive constructions of the significance of the organization sometimes sat alongside an uncertainty as regards the real social impact of the firm:

"…the United Nations Foundation recognized Walgreens Boots Alliance for its Global Leadership Award.[31] I know in my entire career we have never had recognition like that. I think that type of thing really resonates. When the United Nations is recognizing you, this is not a United States thing, this is not a Chicago thing, this is not a Los Angeles thing, this is not a New York thing. This is a planet Earth type influence where we can impact the citizens of the globe and not just regionally." [M44]

5.3 CSR Talk and 'Others'

This section highlights how CSR practitioners appropriated CSR discourse to help differentiate their organization (the 'who') assisting with 'othering' (Hall, 1996) of competitor companies as morally inferior and critics as insincere (the 'what'). From a discourse analytic perspective, the findings in this section are strengthened by observations of how traditional narrative functions associated with rivals and opponents (Silverman, 2006) manifested in the data.

[31]WBA won the United Nations Foundation's 2016 Global Leadership Award for private sector contributions to the SDGs. The award was given in recognition of the 15 million vaccinations provided to countries in development through a Walgreens' and United Nations' Foundation campaign called 'Get a shot, Give a shot'. The award was received by the WBA Co-Chief Operating Officer, and partner of WBA Vice-Chairman and Chief Executive Officer.

5.3.1 Our Competitors Are 'Inferior'

In this sub-section I present data illustrating how some CSR practitioners appropriated CSR talk to construct versions of Walgreens as morally superior to other companies. The analytical focus here is on how interviewees constructed moral superiority regarding their workplace environment by constituting others as caring less and having less social impact (than us). For instance, some interviewees entwined the helping-caring repertoire (see sub-section 4.2.5) with CSR talk to construct an organization inherently 'better' than other organizations in other 'businesses':

> *"So, it's very different than the other companies that I've worked in where there would be a tremendous amount of conflict. Like, 'oh my god, we have all these business priorities and now you're adding all these goofy CSR things that are just so tangential to what we do, that I don't want any part of it'. That isn't here. […] So, I mean we're unique from Whirlpool, from General Motors, all the different organizations I've worked in because, again, of the business that we do. Because those conflicts are much more real if how you make money is somehow quite different, I won't say antithetical, but almost just not on the same page as that care piece." [M33]*

Similarly, another interviewee drew on CSR talk to construct a higher plain and a lower plain of moral purpose amongst companies. In this excerpt below, the author crafts a superior version of the organization 'up here', as one that saves lives, and therefore in this context more profitability is justified in order to provide more worthy services:

> *"And other companies have CSR efforts too. But what differentiates us is that our business is also predominately CSR too. Now we have to be profitable, very profitable because it allows us to deliver even greater services. Not everybody quite has that. If you work for Apple, phones are great, but Samsung makes them too. And so, it's just technology, right, you can move a button here and move a button there and new apps, great and all. Great you know to have devices. But to save somebody's life, that's up here. That's a common life event… That's a big deal. And the things that we're committed to both small and big: HIV centres of excellence for people impacted by the HIV virus as an example, that's character, that's character and it has a CSR element to it. If not predominately so I'd argue." [M91]*

In both the above examples, interviewees assembled CSR talk in ways that helped constitute their business sector and organization as morally superior, not just a retailer or a manufacturer of machines. As noted elsewhere in this chapter, of interest too is the use of the first-person plural 'we' to constitute a sense of a shared group, an us-ness against them-ness (Robichaud et al., 2004) and a sense of not being regular business people. Taking a different approach, another interviewee invoked CSR talk to constitute Walgreens as morally superior to a key competitor, Target. Characteristic of persuasive talk, the footing utterance 'I also know Target', constructs objectivity of the claim (Potter, 1996):

> *"So, when I am making a decision about whether I want to shop at one place versus another, I do look at some of their CSR activities and I will dismiss some of them. So, Target is a good example, where Target says they donate five percent of their income to education, and I believe that they do that, but I also know Target, and I know that a lot of that money goes to charities in Minneapolis, which is where they are headquartered. I have talked to a counterpart there about their work and what they talk about most is about all of the culture and community dollars they give to charities in Minneapolis. When I have asked about national charity and national give back, it is a little less clear. Not that they are not doing it, but it is just less clear. So, that has always stuck in my head…, is it really going to? Is it really having impact? Or is it impacting a local community? Versus Walgreens where I look at it and I know that we have an impact nationally and maybe they do too, I just haven't seen it." [M63]*

5.3.2 Our Competitors Are Insincere and Our Critics 'Bounty Hunters'

Data in this sub-section explore how a few CSR practitioners constituted company competitors and critics in CSR related matters adversely, facilitating positive constructions of Walgreens' moral competence. The analytical focus explored is how interviewees deconstructed threats of moral superiority, by constituting others as less righteous (than us). For instance, in the context of Walgreens being fined for illegal waste dumping in California in 2012, the following excerpt (see Table 4) shows how one CSR practitioner constituted Californian government officials responsible for regulating waste management of environmentally hazardous chemicals as 'bounty hunters'. The interviewee's talk is illuminating in showing the ways stakeholder

positions could be constituted pejoratively in support of positioning a preferred version of the firm.

Interview excerpt: Company critics as 'bounty hunters'
RES: We've never had a problem before. When did we get a chemical, environmental compliance manager? After we were fined x million dollars by the state of California. So, I call… *INT: For?* *RES: Throwing away hairspray in the landfill.* *INT: Okay.* *RES: So, they will follow the truck that has just emptied a Walgreens' dumpster to the landfill dumped it all out, and look for stuff. They're bounty hunters; they see it as a revenue stream, that's how California operates, on everything. So, Walmart's fined $140 million, Walgreens is fined $16.7 million.* *INT: When was that?* *RES: Few years ago. And they'll probably do it again after the … they'll do it on a … once they've seen that they can do it, they'll do it every x number of years depending on what the restrictions are on the settlements.* *INT: Are they bounty hunters or are they protecting the consumers and the environment?* *RES: I think that … I would call it motivation bounty hunting. They will do it under the auspices of protecting, but what's their true motivation? Because if they were … I mean it's like people who … [M12]*

Table 4: Interviewee dialogue with interviewer

This was an embarrassing event for Walgreens, in which it was found to have acted illegally. In constituting the state government officials in a disparaging manner, the narrator constructed doubt as to the regulator's motives. Of note is how the interviewee's statement assembled the story so that Walgreens, rather than constituted as the wrongdoer, was constituted as a victim of entrapment. Though not common in the data because external stakeholders were not a focus of this study, a few interviewees' statements show how critics and competitors could be constituted negatively to facilitate the constitution of a more righteous version of the company. As one research participant offered: *"Some companies you look around you can clearly see that they're doing this [CSR] either publicizing it so that it will have a good financial benefit for them" [M70]*. And, *"…I mean look, people could take Wholefoods to task for putting organic on almost every product. However, you look into that, it's not so organic after all, it was sourced differently" [M52]*. Equally, in regard to not-for-profit campaigns, some interviewees

constructed Walgreens as being 'attacked' or 'stung'. Such words convey a sense of impropriety or unreasonableness on the part of the critics even though the cause was acknowledged: *"... there's no debate that palm oil is an issue, that we're being attacked for palm oil, that we need to address this issue"[M13]*, and, *"Take [name removed], when we get stung… or someone from the group [NGO] will come up, he'll talk to the group, he'll listen to the group"[M61].*

5.4 CSR Text and Us

The data presented in this section show how CSR practitioners discursively reproduced official CSR text in different material objects (official statements, reports and stories) as props to auto-affirm and reference as fact an ideal version of the organization and its key actors. In the first sub-section (5.4.1), the analysis shows how externally circulating official CSR text was embedded in interviewee statements generating a discourse of moral standing from Walgreens' external CSR references. In the second sub-section (5.4.2), the analysis explores how internally circulating official CSR text was embedded in interviewee statements generating a discourse of authorization from CSR discourse interacting with other internal discourses such as finance. The aim of this sub-section is to explore how discursive moves drew on the materiality of CSR text as objects (Cooren et al., 2015; Robichaud et al., 2004) to objectify, validate and distribute preferred realities regarding the cogency of the firm's moral competence.

5.4.1 CSR Text Circulating Externally

> *"... when we get it as a company that's when you can go into any store and talk to our service advisor at the counter and have them tell you a very quick story about why they're doing it. And the perfect examples; when Kennedy was going to the space centre back in the 1960s and remember the guy was sweeping the floor, and he's sweeping up the ear buds whatever. And Kennedy says what are you doing? And he says, 'well I'm sending a man to the moon'. It's this higher mission and that's when our people get it. And it's not until we articulate the story that we draw our focus in." [M93]*

In this opening interview extract, the speaker narrates the storytelling process by which 'our people get it'. The suggestion is that employees will understand how great the company is when they hear the story. That is, their relationship with the company will change for the better via the

agency of the story. Data in this sub-section show how some interviewee statements reproduced official CSR stories circulating externally to constitute ideal versions of Walgreens and its moral standing in the community. For example:

> *"… some of these CSR projects, 'Give a shot, Get a shot', the Vitamin Angels, the Red Nose, you know some of these big corporate initiatives come, and they're on television and people know them, and you go to the local party and people say 'oh yeah, you work with Walgreens don't you, yeah I saw…' and so forth. You begin to feel within the company people begin to like sort of be proud to be part." [M70]*

In this statement above we can observe from a discursive analytic perspective, how material objects (official CSR stories) can become agents at the point the speaker says, 'and people know them'. In the next phrase the 'people' interact with the objects, and these interactions (we are encouraged to understand) change the attitudes of outsiders toward Walgreens. In the last phrase, the speaker constructs the external interactions as a new internal reality and the emergence of a new community of proud employees. Another interview statement below shows how externally circulating stories could also discursively be reproduced in ways that constructed ideal versions of the firm's leadership. Of note in this statement is the omission of reference to the achievement the UN event was celebrating, and instead a stress on 'my senior leadership standing at the front of United Nations'. Also, in this statement, talk refers to 'store employees when they see <u>us</u> in the news', [emphasis added by researcher for illustration purposes], showing again how the externally circulating text can be the agent for influencing the nature of the interaction between organization and employee:

> *"So, our store employees when they see us in the news, or hear about us in the news, you can tell your neighbour, 'hey this is my senior leadership standing at the front of United Nations', it's a proud moment for us when we see it. So, we need to tell that story sometimes probably a little more, to get ahead, to get folks excited." [M60]*

As well as reproducing stories, analysis of interviewee statements shows how some research participants engaged in storytelling constituting versions of self within in the story (Georgakopolou, 2007). In the following statement for instance, the speaker referred not to CSR stories that everyone likes to hear, but to the 'sexy' stories 'that everybody likes to talk about': "*CSR are three magic letters within Walgreens now. People want to be part of it. […] The*

things like 'Get a shot, Give a shot', Vitamin Angels, all those different things, the Red Nose Day, they are the most publicly facing things and they're the sexy ones that everybody likes to talk about" [M30]. The following statement shows one interviewee constituting self in an official CSR story:

> *"But now when I do it, when I'm getting my shot and I put the band aid on, I think about it now as, 'Wow, not only did I just get a shot, I actually helped someone else'. That is what Walgreens did. And that is something of how it's impacted me personally as a consumer. Then I can story tell that with my friends and family. 'Oh, you got your flu shot? You know, when you get your flu shot at Walgreens, you're actually helping out children across the world', and you can specifically talk about it." [M44]*

The following three statements show further how CSR practitioners' talk of externally circulating CSR stories facilitated the construction of a discourse of moral standing in the community. In these statements we see concerns for how others might judge or perceive us (Knights and Clarke, 2014) in the speakers' discursive focus on the story as material agent of influence on the audience (note for example the phrase 'it sends a really nice message') :

> *"I love to tell people about the 'Give a shot, Get a shot' programme, I love to tell people about Vitamin Angels, and 90 percent of the time people say to me now that I know that I'm going to shop at Walgreens more."[M83]*

> *"…this gives you an idea of how the organization wants to give back to the community, not just the international community, we stood for 3 hours in groups of 5 in small assembly lines, […] spooning rice and powder protein and noodles into a bag that was going to feed the hungry in [name removed] […], that was a good thing, and you know it was optional, you weren't required to do it, but when everybody in this enormous room finds out that all these people are from Walgreens, it sends a really nice message."[M40]*

> *" …we don't tell the story very well. We do all these amazing things and I see this with candidates, we bring them in and we give them a little bit of a CSR story and even with new hires and on boarding and they say, 'Holy cow, I had no idea that you were doing*

all of this. This is amazing. If I had known this before, you would have been my first choice without any of the other stuff, you would have been my first choice'. We don't get the recognition that we deserve."[M63]

In the interview statement below, one interviewee's talk shows us how the reproduction of official CSR stories externally in their communities helped some CSR practitioners constitute an objective reality about self and moral purpose in the company. This is underlined with the phrase 'we're really living out those values with this CSR', and how the speaker refers to being part of something 'great' (not bad), above what 'regular' people do: 'it's brought us to a different level, we're not just a pharmacy retailer', or a 'regular retailer,' we're 'on a different level'.

"... It's also externally ... because I met with so many individuals outside the company. It provides a certain level I think of respect and accountability. Not that we didn't have it before. The often quoted line that people say 'oh you work for Walgreens, oh, that stock is performing so well', okay. Fast forward to now, in the last couple of years. 'Oh, I understand that you have a CSR strategy in place and Walgreens is being recognized for your CSR efforts'. But, what's really great to see is that others are recognizing it outside of Walgreens. People actually talk about it and are mentioning it to me in these interactions and these exchanges in a very positive way. And in a way that's just like, 'Wow, that's great what Walgreens is doing'. It's brought us to a different level, we're not just a pharmacy retailer on the corner of happy and healthy. We're really living out those values with this CSR strategy. I think it's fantastic because otherwise we would still be in that 'hey we're doing a lot of great things'."[M52]

5.4.2 CSR Text Circulating Internally

"And so I think we're doing the right thing because we have people who have the commitment level from that place. And they're coming to work every day, you know with that intent. So I think that's what makes us for me to say we're doing a great thing."[M73]

Data analysis in this sub-section explores how internally circulating official CSR text (such as CSR strategy, CSR resources, CSR reports and audits, CSR events and shareholder statements) was embedded in interviewee statements in ways that facilitated constructs of authorization linking CSR discourse with other internal discourses. Internally, CSR text interacting with other recognized organizational repertoires or languages (Gee, 1999) such as that of strategy, finance and business, helped constitute insurance that CSR was real. For example, in the opening interview quote above, having staff allocated to CSR roles was constructed by one interviewee as fact that 'we're doing a great thing'. We can observe the same pattern in the following excerpt:

> *"We're going to talk about it and carve out significant resources to make sure that we do this well. We've identified our strategy. It's a very well thought out process. […]This is where the company is putting time, talent, treasure, resources. This is what the company thinks is very important."[M52]*

In the same way strategy as practice scholars have found that strategy tools acquire agency through physicality (Jarzabkowski et al., 2013), having a CSR strategy, or a 'plan', for instance was constructed as material approval of CSR's importance and the significance of moral matters to the organization. Ascribing physicality to CSR seemed to protect against peripheralization or triviality: *"So you know as far as the [CSR] strategy we know that again, from the [executive managers] on down, it's something that you know Walgreens as an organization, it's part of our strategy, it's not something separate" [M01]*. In these statements the 'plan' was sometimes objectified as equivalent of CSR enactment:

> *"I think you know, I think they've [the executives] thought a long way down the road and they know how they're going to get there and they know what pieces to move next to do that. And that's kind of refreshing because they're partly on the road. And that doesn't mean there won't be lumps and bumps along the way, at least they have a plan, and they know how they're going to execute it."[M70]*

A shared pattern across these statements was the construction of the CSR strategy or 'plan' as objective insurance against marginalization or trivialization of the moral, social and environmental agenda: *"Now we have all this strategy, you can focus and have some direction and really drive towards making a true impact not just kind of fluffy bits on the side that just kind of happen. It's cool to have like a direction and we drive towards those goals" [M90]*.

And: *"The other part of implementation was to actually have a plan though, because diversity can really be seen often times as a softer kind of thing. But you have to have a plan, and a quantitative plan specifically" [M91].*

CSR reports acquired a special agency in interviewee statements on account it seems of their interaction with languages of auditing, finance and publishing: *"So we did have these isolated wells of activity where there might be quite a lot going on, but we didn't sing our own praises, we certainly didn't release any reports" [M12]*. Noteworthy in this excerpt is the materiality of the report in constructing discourses of significance. The three interview statements below illustrate a similar pattern:

> *"I think we're taking it [CSR] seriously. I mean one example is just we were able to publish the first CSR report. The fact that this year we're going to publish numbers and we are putting auditing, like auditing our results like it is you know P&L.*[32] *Like is there a balance sheet, is there a profit statement? We are treating it like a business strategy like it's embedded into our business."[M64]*

> *"…I know that if you want to call it the head of the company, the intellect, the finance people… they're part of this group, and they review it and they go over it and we're spending money with the Deloitte and DeTouche to verify all the numbers [in the report].I mean it makes me think it's more tangible and important."[M61]*

> *"The CSR report gets published, people get to read it. They get to see some of the things that we're doing. They get to see some of our aspirations. It's much better than just saying 'oh that's the feel good people that are just doing this just to make us feel good'. It definitely is very important to people top to bottom." [M30]*

Illuminating the organizing implications of discourse, one interviewee's statement below shows how repeated official CSR texts could be constructed to establish certainty that a CSR agenda was a 'big deal' at the company:

> *"[the executive manager] is always talking about Red Nose Day and their commitment to CSR even in the WBA earnings or in the annual stock holders meeting there was a*

[32] Profit and Loss

headline on CSR. So the – even if you're not like truly engaged in CSR, just being an employee here, you're going to be hearing it around here and hearing that it's a big deal." [M71]

Reminding us of how these statements reflected the preferred ideal realities of the respective speakers, another interviewee constructed a somewhat different reality about the level of authority and significance of CSR to the organization: *"I think to the internal CSR team it's very serious. Outside of that group and the champions I'm not sure how much gets exposed outside of that kind of smaller team. The stores don't talk about it. Leadership doesn't, so I'm not sure how much is reaching the greater population" [M22]*.

5.5 Conclusion

This analysis shows how many CSR practitioners adopted very varied, but often shared, discursive practices in which CSR strategizing was constituted and socially embedded as referencing a positive moral identity and life world. The analyses detail how many CSR practitioners appropriated CSR discourse as a flexible discursive resource for morally protagonizing, narrativizing and dignifying their work setting, constructing a preferred version of the workplace, their identity and purpose in it. The data show how this identity work helped research participants dispel antagonistic discourses and uncertainties about how others might judge them and fears of insignificance, moral indifference or uncertainty, or social irrelevance. In other words, research participants often appropriated CSR discourse in the case study context in ways that helped stabilize moral meanings in the workplace, rather than in ways that introduced new meanings or challenged existing meanings. The findings explore how identity-centric appropriation of CSR discourse may constrain CSR practices by limiting the appropriation of new understandings and know-how. Chapter 6 will now focus on CSR enactment.

6: CSR Enactment

6.1 Introduction

> *"…so I think that's the way out, but it's slow going, and you have to be willing to set these little goals, and these little targets, and you see companies setting these big broad innovative agendas and you want to be there, and you know as a company that you could be there, but you have to take a step back from that and say 'well, we're going to do little things that we know we can do 100 percent, and then we'll go up on the big issues'."[M13b]*

Following a discourse analytic approach concerned with *"an ongoing, probably spoken, interaction, and with how speakers talk and what they do through talk"* (Taylor, 2001:16), data presented in this chapter explore how CSR practitioners constructed CSR during enactment. Consistent with my practice-based approach, I show how CSR strategizing was constituted at five different discursive sites identified during my analysis: sites where the social and meaning were ascribed (Reckwitz, 2002). The chapter explores different ways in which CSR practitioners discursively assemble CSR as observant of the rules, know-how and understandings of familiar local strategy practices, and how strategy *ought* to be performed in the workplace. In this way the analyses explore how CSR practices were constituted from existing, not new, *"mental activities"* (Reckwitz, 2002:249) concerning *"shared understandings of good or appropriate performance"* (Shove et al., 2012:23), and how strategy *ought to* be practiced for the creation of situated internal rewards (MacIntyre, 1985).[33]

The aim of this chapter is to explore how in the case study setting CSR discourse was an 'object' (in the sense described by Cooren et al., 2015) via which CSR practitioners discursively practised followership of the business strategy. The important insight is that CSR in the context setting, as reproduced by research participants was not constructed as a discourse of difference, innovation, self-reflection, criticism, challenge or divergence. Nor did CSR practitioners constitute themselves as agitators, activists, protagonists or crusaders as discussed in chapter 2. Rather, they constructed CSR as a discourse of faithfulness to localised strategy practices. These

[33] For an explanation of internal rewards see chapter 2, sub-section 2.3.2

findings offer an empirical view of how middle managers with formal CSR responsibilities constituted CSR in ways that narrowed and reduced its meanings. The case study suggests that contextual factors such as how practitioners adhere to how strategy *ought* to be performed, and how they constitute themselves in relation to strategy discourses significantly influences the constitution of CSR practices and its outcomes.

As discussed in chapter 2, the concept followed in this chapter is that in which practices are *"forms of bodily activities, forms of mental activities, "things" and their use, a background knowledge in the form of understandings, know-how, states of emotion and motivational knowledge"* (Reckwitz, 2002:249). Practices are also open sets of *"doings and sayings"* (Schatzki, 1996:89), organized by common understanding, teleologies (ends and tasks), and rules (Schatzki, 1996 and 2002). These form nexuses of activities that befall people (Schatzki 2012), and in which individuals are carriers of practices (Reckwitz, 2002; Shove et al., 2012).

Methodologically, the chapter is organized according to five discursive sites. These sites were identified during the data analysis process. From a practice perspective these sites refer to *"the locality where something happens or exists in relation to other events and phenomena"* (Nicolini, 2011:604), and are defined by Shove et al., as *"in the moment of doing, practitioners simultaneously reproduce the practices in which they are engaged and the elements of which these practices are made"* (2012:22). Data analyses identified these sites in the research context as: 1) the moment when CSR discourse entangled with strategy discourse; 2) the moment when CSR practitioners engaged others for collaboration on CSR; 3) the moment of CSR role construction (who a person is allowed to be in a company); 4) the moment when CSR practitioners constituted the significance of CSR to others at the company; and, 5) the moment when CSR practitioners constituted the significance of CSR to self. Here I make no claim that these moments were or are the only moments in CSR strategizing in the context of the research study. Rather, these were significant and distinct moments observable in the data that offered research insight into the situated meaning of CSR practices. In each of these moments CSR was constituted in ways that harmonised with situated understandings of how work ought to be performed and how internal rewards (MacIntyre, 1985), such as status, visibility, and promotion prospects, could be achieved. This focus on moments helps ensure the research approach follows an understanding of practices and agency as neither strictly micro or macro but as a "web of practices" (Vaara and Whittington, 2012:286), knotted together via social sanctioning (Shove et al., 2012).

The five sites of practice identified in my analysis are explored in section 6.2. Sub-section 6.2.1 explores how CSR practitioners constituted CSR practices to observe prevailing business strategy practices. The next sub-section (6.2.2), explores how CSR practitioners discursively constituted and positioned CSR as a resource for emulating the achievement of internal rewards as contextually understood. An exploration of data regarding role construction follows in sub-section 6.2.3. This shows how CSR practitioners often constituted their roles as harmonizing with others, as facilitative and non-challenging. In the next sub-section (6.2.4), the analysis explores how CSR was constituted in ways that helped mitigate the presumed workplace anxieties and antagonisms of others. And finally, in the last sub-section (6.2.5) I explore data showing how CSR practitioners constructed CSR as offering an opportunity for positive self-identity work in the workplace. Section 6.3 concludes this chapter. The framework for presenting these findings is summarised in Table 5.

CSR strategizing ('what')	**CSR talk by CSR practitioners ('who')**	**Positioning of CSR practices (doing)**
Practice one Positioning of CSR in relation to strategy discourse	CSR discursively situated to observe and honour local understandings of *good* business strategy know-how, rules and understandings related to areas such as cost savings, marketing goals and quality assurance.	CSR practices constituted as faithful to strategy practices and localised strategy understandings, know-how and rules.
Practice two Positioning of CSR in relation to performance of strategy practices	CSR discursively positioned to emulate internal rewards associated with performing strategy practices.	CSR practices constituted as discretional in relation to performing strategy practices.
Practice three Positioning of CSR in terms of role construction	CSR roles discursively constituted as harmonizing with strategy roles.	CSR agency constituted as facilitative and non-challenging (of strategy).
Practice four Constructing the meaning of CSR experiences for others	CSR discursively constituted as a remedy for presumed antagonisms and anxieties in the workplace.	CSR practices constituted as an internal affective resource.
Practice five Constructing the meaning of CSR experiences for self	CSR by CSR practitioners situated as an opportunity for positive self-identity work.	CSR practices sustained at the site of self.

Table 5: Summary of 'web' of CSR practices

These findings contribute to continuing debates about CSR strategizing in three ways. First, they shed light on the internal situated practices that constrain and enable CSR implementation and outcomes (Basu and Palazzo, 2008). In this respect the findings add to debates about the influence of different organizational dimensions in shaping CSR (Wickert et al., 2016), articulating from a sociological perspective a link between how local strategy practices are performed and how CSR practices become sustained or fragmented. Second, the findings contribute to debates about the entwinement of CSR practitioners and CSR practices by showing how localised meanings of good work and what it means to do good work influence the (de)stabilization of CSR practices (Carollo and Guerci, 2017; Hengst et al., 2019; Wickert and De Bakker, 2018). Third, the research contributes to practice debates by extending empirical understanding of the situated struggles and contradictions that span groups of practices as they interact during performance in complex organizations (Anesa et al., 2019), and the implications on uneven, contradictory or selective outcomes (Soderstrom and Weber, 2019).

6.2 CSR Practice

This section explores the five practices identified in the data analysis process as part of CSR strategizing at Walgreens.

6.2.1 Practice One: CSR and Strategy Discourses

How CSR discourse interfaces with the main strategy discourse in a firm is probably one of the most important aspects of CSR practice, yet one that has received limited attention, save for the studies by Gond et al. (2018) and Hengst et al. (2019) discussed in chapter 2. Consistent with the overall aims of my inquiry, this sub-section is not concerned with how CSR practitioners incorporated CSR into business strategy. Rather, my interest lies with generating insight into the becoming of CSR practices as CSR discourse interfaces with context-based understandings of strategy. Analysis in this sub-section of CSR talk during enactment shows how many CSR practitioners constituted CSR from the discursive repertoires of existing and differing business strategy discourses (Seidl, 2007). Data explored show how CSR was discursively positioned in ways that honoured local understandings of strategy, and how strategy *ought* to be performed. With reference to the research questions of the thesis, the analyses show how situating CSR as

concordant with local strategy discourses constrained CSR practices by reducing the discursive options through which CSR discourse could achieve meaning and distinctiveness.

The extracts below show how CSR was often discursively situated as concordant with familiar business discourses such as return on investment, growing market share, strengthening cost savings and quality, brand differentiation and growing customer engagement. In the following interviewee statement for example, CSR was constructed according to assumed understandings of the primacy of profit maximization: *"…while we do it [CSR] we know it's a good thing, we also have to be cautious about its implementation to make sure that it doesn't have an adverse effect on the business" [M40]*. In marketing, CSR was also constituted from localised strategy discourses governing brand attractiveness and differentiation: *"I got hooked up with CSR because our cause marketing – the whole point of it is really to get more credit for our brand, for our brand to be differentiated and our brand to be well loved" [M71]*. As another interviewee statement showed:

> *"Both Vitamin Angels and 'Get a shot, Give a shot' really had proven to be differentiators in consumers' minds and allows us to make commoditised product actually have more of an emotional connection. […] and that has a business impact over and above just those specific [product] categories that we're trying to drive."[M31]*

In these statements CSR was constituted not as a new practice, but as serving and protecting understandings of existing *good* strategy practices. Even within the context of philanthropy work, CSR was constituted as observing business understandings: *"We invest in groups and organizations and sponsored programmes as an investment to the reputation of our company. Some investments are immediate […], we don't want to continue giving money into no return on investment" [M61]*. Consistent with Seidl's (2007) argument that strategy discourse is in fact many different and fragmented situated discourses in different fields (see sub-section 2.3.2), this pattern in the data analysis featured across different areas of strategy practices. For example, in the following excerpt CSR was constituted as similar to Toyota's lean production system in 1980s, and interchangeable with improving quality and reducing cost:

> *"…our CSR agenda brings two things together in terms of quality and cost. […] So, actually they synthesize or converge much more so than people think, but you've got to*

go through the philosophical discussion because if you don't see that connection, then it would appear well, we've got all this stuff for adding that's additional cost when we're driving out cost. I think back to that transition in manufacturing where high quality is low cost; […] it's the same with any cost programme. In this case, you replace quality for the most with the CSR agenda."[M33]

Reminding us of the close link between practices, their performance and identities (Knights and Morgan 1991; Tsoukas, 2018), the above interview excerpt shows how situating CSR as knotted to understandings of quality control also constituted the practitioner as being strategically faithful. In this sense, the above statement (through the object of CSR) shows how one CSR practitioner in observing strategy discourses and how strategy *ought* to be performed, neutralized alternative meanings and differentiated interpretations that CSR discourse might have suggested in terms of 'stuff for adding'.

Constituting CSR in terms of cost benefits to the company featured strongly in the research data. The statement below shows how one CSR practitioner situated CSR as a 'bottom line' business opportunity for other middle managers. The repetition of the word 'actually' in this instance shows a situated emphasis on constituting CSR as protective of existing *good* business strategy practices, and their meaning in terms of constituting work in the local context:

"So, she made a town hall with the entire organization, all about CSR this summer, and all the different aspects of CSR, and the ways that people in the merchandising organization, could actually set CSR goals and targets for themselves, […] helping her merchants really understand how they can take some of these concepts and apply it to the work that they're doing and why that's actually of benefit to them and not just… 'Oh this is an extra thing I have to do', […] it can actually have a positive impact on your bottom line."[M13]

Mantere (2013) explains how linguistic experts in organizations oversee the use and maintenance of strategy language at the micro level to generate collective and shared enactment. With this in mind, data from the case study show how some CSR practitioners constituted CSR practices from strategy discourses in ways that would earn approval of others by affirming familiar local understandings of what constituted *good* work. For example in this case: "…*when you are able to define, this is how it ties to the strategy and this is how it is delivering, not just*

on the CSR strategy but on the business strategy, most people will look at it and if you have done your quality of work, they will say, that makes sense to me" [M63]. In one concrete example, regarding the introduction of free-range eggs, the interviewee statement below shows how CSR was discursively situated within prevailing understandings and know-how pertaining to market trends (not CSR trends) and local strategy delivery 'rules'. This statement shows the agency of prevailing strategy discourses in narrowing the meaning of CSR and how CSR practices were constituted*:*

> *"So, once we understood that there was not going to be a major issue from the supplier side, and the market is shifting, so, consumers are slowly starting to expect cage free eggs and you're seeing this more and more and more, it became very easy to get that buy in. That… [name removed] not asking you to do this by 2018, when consumers aren't… consumers are not going to be there and the supplier is not going to be there. [name removed]'s asking you to do this by 2025, when consumers,…their mind set will be there. So, if they have to pay a dollar extra for eggs, they're going to do it, and the price will have dropped down at that point anyway, because the supply will be there to support it."[M13]*

One interviewee's account of persuading other middle managers to authorize funds to buy 30,000 safety signs for store premises is also illuminating. Fragments of statements from this account show how a potential minor deviation from accepted strategy understandings, denoted by the phrase 'do we know what this is?', became a collective site for colleagues to assess how locally sanctioned strategy understandings remained intact, 'everybody wanted to know all the details' in the way described by Mantere (2013):

> *"So [name removed] needed about 30,000 signs to go through the stores. […] And [name removed] went through a lot of obstacles about the cost of these signs to the company. And believe me at one point we went through, probably went through bureaucracy, finance bureaucracy, at every level, to say we want to spend this amount of a couple of hundred thousand dollars to prevent this maximum amount of injuries. And folks were like, do we know what this is? Everybody wanted to know all the details."[M60]*

In another example of the strategy language games described by Mantere (2013), we can observe how strategy practices were discursively performed to achieve an approval for light emitting diode (LED) electric bulbs. In this instance, the interview statement suggests how meanings became 'fuzzy' as environmental meanings were constructed as faithful to business strategy discourses:

> *"Things like that [LED lighting] become that return on investment discussion, become the cost savings discussion and it's a little bit fuzzy because it's really a CSR themed, environmental, sustainability themed, benefit that we can go after, but the rationale behind getting it approved isn't always because it's better for the environment. So with LED lights, it's often because, to get the approvals in place, because we can show that we can save money by doing it. And I don't think that's a bad thing to save the money, and if that's what it takes to get it approved, that's what it takes, but I think it's still from my perspective, you know as a design professional, it's still something that we can and should, you know, pursue for larger benefits than just saving utility costs."[M23]*

In a final example we can observe an attempt to deviate from situated understandings of *good* strategy practices in the local context. Table 6 details a recalled conversation between several CSR practitioners and other middle managers regarding recycling of paper and plastics, as opposed to just paper. The reported dialogue offers insight into the particularities of the teleoaffective structure (Schatzki, 2002) of performing strategy practices in the local context, by showing how meaning (what is included and excluded according to local know-how) was formed in the performance of practices. This can be observed as: 1) the moment of being in the meeting to ensure an agreed target is met; and, 2) how a proposed deviation from the ends-means leads to 'these people tense up' because, 'this is not what this meeting was called for'.

Recycling Paper and Plastics
RES: ... that's when it gets the most tense […], because they've got deadlines – you know you have to understand that people have deadlines. And those priorities to them come first, because that's their target, you know like making this process recyclable wasn't on their target sheet at all so, so yes, there's definitely still conflict. *INT: What happened in the meeting?* *RES: [LAUGHS] […]Those kind of conversations have already been and gone, so*

this meeting was really about like how it could work in the corporate campus and distribution centres […]. And that's how the meeting started, but then [we] were in the meeting and [we] got very excited about, I think they mentioned one of their like environmental pieces and [we were] saying, 'oh you know that's something we're already working towards too', it's – likeminded philosophy. [We're] like, 'we're still talking about perhaps doing the separation between the plastic and the paper in the pharmacy', […] and they were thinking, to them we were over that conversation. [LAUGH] So it kind of – yeah, I think they felt like we don't want anything to prevent this project hitting the ground, like it's meant to happen in two weeks. So they, you could almost like feel it in the room and these people tense up like 'why are you talking about this right now? This is…., this is not what this meeting was called for'. [M90]

Table 6: Interview dialogue with interviewer

6.2.2 Practice Two: CSR and Internal Rewards

"I mean I don't want to say it's universal but I haven't found opposition to the [CSR] pillars. It's getting interest to actually do something to make a difference or support the efforts, formerly support the efforts is what I see. I mean you believe in it but then how do you get to the next step of actually supporting it?"[M04]

The way internal rewards are socially constructed in an organization determines what work becomes valued, who gets recognized and how organizational members become valued in their workplace setting. The aim of this sub-section is to show how CSR practitioners discursively constructed internal rewards for doing CSR in ways that emulated rewards associated with the performance of strategy practices. To do this I explore data relating to the discursive positioning of CSR practices *vis-à-vis* the performance of strategy practices. Empirical research has shown that middle managers often play mediating roles between departments and services (Balogun et al., 2005), and at the borders and key intersections of an organization (Rouleau, 2005), laterally and from the middle-down (Wickert and De Bakker, 2018). In the Walgreens' context a key intersection for implementing CSR was between CSR practitioners and middle managers at head office, and between CSR practitioners at head office and store managers and pharmacists spread across Walgreens' network of stores. Having identified these intersections as key moments in CSR enactment, data in this sub-section detail how CSR was discursively arranged to emulate internal rewards associated with performing strategy that conformed to interviewee

understandings of the type of work valued in the context of the case study. In so doing the analysis shows how CSR practices were often constituted as discretionary to strategy practices.

In a context where the meaning of *good* work was constituted locally from strategy discourses, as explored in sub-section 6.2.1, CSR was also constituted as faithful to the performance of strategy practices and strategy practitioners. This interview statement illuminates:

> *"When we come in to talk to people, we really try to impart to them that we want to understand your business and what motivates you, that we want to be successful with you. We want to help you be successful and we don't want to do something that is not going to ultimately enhance your business in some way. We're not here to try to make people's lives more difficult, although sometimes it is a lot of extra work, but usually there's a good outcome for it. I think we've been able to show that engagement in this way provides positive outcomes for everybody. Again, I think when people see… if we do this initiative with you, we may get more facetime with senior management, or we may get an article in an internal communication, that's very motivating for people to know that their work can be showcased in different ways. […]So, I think just working very collaboratively with people and not coming in and trying to say, 'I'm going to tell you what to do with your business', but rather saying, 'I want to understand what it is you are doing, this is what I'm thinking, can we work together on this?', that provides a lot of success for us, taking that strategy."[M13]*

In positioning CSR as a resource to support colleagues' performance of strategy practices, this interview statement above shows how CSR practices were constituted as facilitating work success, status and identities of others. It also shows how offering internal rewards to others reciprocated success and internal rewards for CSR practitioners (Mantere, 2008). As with the previous sub-section (6.2.1), where data showed how CSR talk was constituted to observe local understandings of *good* strategy, here data show how CSR talk was constituted as protective of performing *good* strategy practices, and observant of the agency of those considered strategists. This can be seen in the above statement in the phrases: 'we're not here to try to make people's lives more difficult' and 'we're not here to tell you what to do with your business.' The following interviewee statement, in which one CSR practitioner explains the how-to of influencing other middle managers, offers more insight:

> *"…you can speak to them in a way that makes sense to them, and like build an excitement around it and like 'this is something you can do', it's not us telling you to do, this is something you have the choice to do if you want, […] empowering them to make those decisions, and know that they can make those decisions and it's an option for them, like it can make business sense and it can differentiate you from others."[M90]*

From a functionalist perspective these statements might appear to illustrate relational skills characteristic of issue-selling by CSR practitioners (Wickert and De Bakker, 2018), or political skills of middle managers (Balogun et al., 2005; Rouleau and Balogun, 2011), and perhaps they do. But a sociological eye cannot help but observe the absence of CSR content in these statements and the construction of internal rewards for the performance of strategy practices such as maximising differentiation of the firm from its competitors. Here value is centred on performing strategy know-how, not CSR know-how. The following two statements show how taken-for-granted assumptions in the talk of CSR practitioners privileged localised understandings of business strategy work as 'better' and 'bigger' work, and constituted CSR as less important, as training for doing other important work.

> *"…by and large the people are able to use it [CSR] as a springboard for bigger and better things. Because what tends to happen is that the CSR agenda gives people opportunities to shine and be seen by senior management. And because of that, it makes it easier for them to progress […] Now I might feel that I want to do something that I want to cut my teeth on. Now by and large if someone messes up a charity fundraising [name removed] it's not the end of the world, but if it goes well that person has a chance to impress with their skills."[M84]*

In the next interview excerpt, regarding the recruitment of individuals to the new CSR champions' network, we see again how CSR could be constituted as a resource for enhancing employee competitiveness and visibility amongst peers and senior managers. Employee struggles for differentiation in large corporations have been discussed in the organization studies literature (see for example Jackall, 1988), and from the perspective of internal struggles for individual power in the CSR literature (Bondy, 2008). Data from my case study add to these perspectives. Here we see how competing discourses for individual distinctiveness act on CSR constituting it in ways that are marginal and discretional. This is made clearer by the speaker's reference to CSR as 'soft':

"Yeah, I mean we said it was a specifically a good way for them to network, it's a good way for them to make connections. It's good visibility for them so they get that recognition within their region. They get face time with their bosses as you know as the CSR champion they're now responsible to communicate up, so they get that extra time with their…, with the Co-VP's to let them know what's going on. And we kind of sold it on the soft side too, again, if this is somebody that is already excited about CSR, excited about community work then this is something they're going to be excited to do."[M21]

In the previous two statements, interviewees constructed understandings of work as they accorded with (or rejected) what was socially valued and worthy of recognition. The extent to which performing strategy practices was constituted as taken-for-granted by CSR practitioners in the case study context is shown in the next extract. This involves one CSR practitioner at head office talking about CSR enactment with store employees. In this instance below, an old CSR activity at the stores was modified to be performed more *strategically*:

"So, one example for CSR is that, the stores you know would – let's say a store was on the path of a 5K run or walk, they would set up a table and sell T-shirts and candy […] We're saying you can do that, but we're supposed to be a health and beauty destination. Why not sell things related to health and beauty […], and so the team was like we can do that, and they like thought of all these cool things that they could do within health and beauty, and they felt like they were getting, you know, pats on the back for selling so much […] And so it was like a win-win, people felt good."[M71]

The statement shows how the CSR practitioner at head office constructed value in accordance with how CSR helped the performance of strategy practices, claiming store employees were getting 'pats on the back for selling so much', and that it was a 'win-win'. The excerpt shows how one understanding of *good* CSR at store level was displaced with a 'strategy' understanding of CSR from head office, which was also offered by the interviewee as *good*. In this sense, the excerpt is an example of how CSR was constituted as having lesser value by some CSR practitioners when it was not assembled in ways that enabled the performance of strategy practices.

We know from Laine and Vaara's 2007 study how professional sectors in organizations can resist top management strategies. In the final example of this sub-section, we see how store pharmacists discursively perform the practices of their profession to reject a CSR initiative from head office concerning the introduction of recycled paper for customer scripts.[34] For pharmacists the prescription can be a symbolic artefact embodying the significance of practices, such as special relations with physicians and patients, transmitting vital information to keep patients well, and reflecting medical and scientific standing and knowledge of the profession. This is an interesting extract because it shows how other professional groups in the organization (other than middle management strategists), with different ways of constituting internal rewards, might resist the way CSR was advocated by head office CSR practitioners. It suggests that such resistance might have stemmed from efforts to discursively control how their practice is constituted and how internal rewards regarding their practice are defined and sanctioned:

> *"Now where we have run into problems was feedback from the pharmacists that have to do this, was some of that 'hey this doesn't look as bright', or, 'I don't think our customers are going to like it', or, 'the way it feels bothers me'. Some said it bothers them. So, like, what are we going to do? So, really, with that one it was just about, my opinion we should have implemented by now…" [M11]*

6.2.3 Practice Three: CSR Role Construction

Remembering that *"one comes to be a certain person in the social world through one's interactions with others"* (Cronen, 1995:35), and that, practitioners are *"defined by the practices in which they engage, or by which they are caught"* (Shove et al., 2012:70), the aim of this sub-section is to explore how CSR practitioners constructed their roles. As discussed in chapter 2 (sub-section 2.2.8), academic literature on CSR practitioners has described CSR roles, like those of middle managers in general, as institutionally weak (Daudigeos, 2013; Risi and Wickert, 2017). Highlighting how some CSR practitioners see themselves as institutionally separate from the rest of the organization, they have at times been referred to as 'insider activists' (Briscoe and Gupta, 2016), 'crusaders by conviction' and their CSR departments as 'an internal NGO' (Wickert and De Bakker, 2018).

[34] English: Prescriptions.

In the case of Walgreens, however, analysis of CSR role talk shows how CSR practitioners constituted selves that harmonised with their context, in ways that positioned their roles within discourses about 'contributing' to the business (strategy). The following interviewee statement illuminates: *"I mean literally. I mean, if I'm not producing… I hope they would tell me. I hope they would say to me, well [name removed], here's what you need to do to succeed, here's the things that we want, here's how you're not on strategy" [M61].* Further statements by the same interviewee show how this identity as being 'on strategy' was constituted against a pejorative and unwanted identity of being seen as 'pie in the sky'*:*

> *"…if you're coming as a CSR person who is pie in the sky and doesn't have the reason behind it, then I think you're greeted somewhat differently… not always bad, because we do love people with out of the box thinking, […] the way that you're looked at being in the company, is as good as how well you contribute to the business."[M61]*

This statement is interesting because it shows an understanding of CSR roles as stigmatized and of weak intellect ('doesn't have the reason') unless constituted according to accepted strategy understandings. In another interview statement we see one CSR practitioner wrestling with a discourse of 'CSR people' as not clever or tough enough:

> *"CSR people are luvies, they come from a marketing background. Finance people are driven by their heads, CSR people by their hearts. We're tree-huggers, finance colleagues are very nervous about talking to me, or the perception is that they are nervous. We pretend to be tree-huggers, but we are not. If we were we would not be able to get stuff like this strategy done."[M84]*

In the trajectory of this statement (above) the interviewee finally demolishes the 'tree-hugger' self, and from the debris constructs a more strategic self, which the interviewee proffers as more acceptable and respected in the organization. These two interviewee statements show how in some instances, role construction in the case study context was constituted by disassociating from (perceived or real) understandings of CSR identities as negative identities and associating with strategy identities perceived as more positive. Data show how other CSR practitioners also constituted themselves from this internal perspective as contributors to the company strategy:

"… that's my target, get a great workplace, at a global level, at a company level. To say we're coming here, we're happy, we're safer, we're going home safer. The customers good, their experience is safer, better. That's our contribution for the image of the company" [M60].

While some CSR practitioners constructed CSR roles as contributing to strategy, others constituted them as service roles in the form of helping, facilitating and connecting others. Data show how these role types of 'helper' were at times constructed in ways that stressed an auxiliary role as helping 'other people' in the company to contribute: *"So I see myself as a facilitator, an organizer, that's how I'm contributing, I'm enabling other people to do the really great things that Walgreens does" [M21]*; and, *"So my role is a connector: I am here to help break down silos. I'm here to help people work together towards a common goal […] So, really my role is all about connecting people, giving them support and education as they need it" [M13];* and, *"I'm a helper. You know, my job is to make sure we have the right policies and procedures in place to make it easier for our people and our managers to volunteer and contribute their time" [M41].*

Analysis of data showing the construction of CSR roles in the third person also showed how the roles were constructed in ways that emphasized internal harmonization: For instance one interviewee said *"their vibe about CSR is infectious. They get everybody excited about what they do, and how they're helping and who they're helping and how you can help us help them" [M43].* Another interviewee described CSR practitioners in the following way: *"I think extroverts are very comfortable in this role. I think you know party planning personalities in general. I think those who like to help people…" [M02].*

In this context, the following statements show how some CSR practitioners constructed their agency in terms of local understandings of how an ideal employee *ought* to be at the firm, as facilitative and non-challenging. This role construction was observable during my field research in that one CSR practitioner had on their desk a copy of the book *The Power of Nice: How to Conquer the Business World with Kindness* (Kaplan Thaler and Koval, 2006). The following interviewee statement shows how this form of agency was constituted: *"So just trying to navigate the different personalities, […] I enjoy the challenge of trying to read somebody, but it is, when it doesn't work it's not fun. When you don't do a good job reading [the person], or you don't get the response that you need, obviously that's not fun" [M21].* Another interviewee elucidated:

"I think having that strength and that personability to be able to ask those questions without coming across like your challenging or criticizing people, I think it's a really delicate balance and a really difficult skill in some ways because I think people don't like being told their doing things in ways that they shouldn't be." [M90]

In this statement CSR agency and participation in the workplace are discursively positioned as compromised on account of having to appear as unchallenging and uncritical. Recalling Mumby's (2011) advisory against researcher tendencies to make sweeping generalizations about organizational culture from interview data, the point here is not to interpret these statements as suggestive of a particular culture in the organization. Rather, the statements show how some CSR practitioners, in particular those with full-time CSR roles, self-monitored their agency to concord with their understandings of how the ideal employee should be in the local context. In constructing socially harmonious selves they also protected self against anxieties associated with negative identities, such as being perceived as 'pie in the sky', or unsociably 'challenging' or 'criticizing', or as a, *"a bunch of people running around trying to feel good" [M30]*.

6.2.4 Practice Four: Constructing CSR Experiences for Others

The purpose of this sub-section is to explore how some CSR practitioners discursively constituted the meaning of everyday CSR experiences for other organizational members. The analysis shows a discourse of CSR as remedy for mitigating assumed antagonisms or anxieties in the workplace. The sub-section details examples of *"doings and sayings"* (Schatzki, 1996:89) in interviewee statements in which meanings ascribed to CSR experiences were categorized as affective. Recalling from chapter 2 how CSR was discussed as an emotional tool (Costas and Kärreman, 2013) several interviewee statements show how CSR was constructed as an antidote for assumed emotional needs of others. In the first of these statements one interviewee described CSR as helping ensure 'we're not just cogs in a wheel'. The statement is offered in the context of talking about organizing feedback from a work charity event:

"I think that there are processes for feedback […] to help make sure that not only the [charity] event goes well, but the people involved, or how the communication came out to the employees, you know to improve upon that, I feel like that kind of supports

making it seem that we're not just cogs in a wheel but actual participants, critical to the success of a lot of these initiatives."[M02]

Similarly, another interviewee statement shows how one CSR practitioner constructed CSR communications from context-based presumptions that organizational members 'wanna feel good about what they're doing' because 'we're still behind':

"I'm going to monitor and communicate those wins, because otherwise only the sourcing agents are gonna be aware of the wins. 'Oh, we reduced the packaging from 75 square inches to 52 square inches of […] paperboard'. So, you need to sing those praises because the culture in the U.S., we're still behind Europe as is common, but the employees - we're just 300,000 plus - are starting to clammer for it, you know, they wanna feel good about what they're doing."[M12]

Emphasizing how the workplace was not 'fun', one CSR practitioner constructed CSR in terms of a good news story to change the rhythm of bad news stories assumed to be saturating the working day:

"We talk about plenty of things that are not fun. We talk about budget constraints, we talk about stores changing operating hours, we talk about maybe losing access to a healthcare plan, but we can always interject a good story, which is CSR, you can always have that piece to go in there."[M44]

In another interview excerpt we see how one CSR practitioner constructed CSR to counter what was assumed to be the insignificant workplace experience of an employee in a *'sleepy little store'*:

"I walk into a store in [name removed], and it's a sleepy little store, […] it does 2,500 bucks a day, […] and I was talking with this customer service associate, and she had on a Vitamin Angels' pin. And I just kind of looked at her pin, and I just said, you're wearing a Vitamin Angels' pin, and she goes, 'oh, have you heard about this

programme? And she downloaded to me almost verbatim what I had told her boss …, not to her … her boss's boss, not too long prior, right. And I'm getting goose-bumps right now, talking to you about it ... and that's how you understand that this message is getting to the right people, and it's making an impact."[M14]

Scholars have shown how middle managers can be concerned about the encroachment of corporations on the emotional and psychological arena of individual employees as managers are required to direct behaviours and attitudes (Fleming and Sturdy, 2010; Huy, 2002). In this respect, the next interviewee statement shows how CSR experiences could be constructed as moments of 'fun' and moments in which employees were uncontrolled. Of note in the statement is how the interviewee claims to know the meaning of 'nice' for store employees:

"…the CSR portion of their job is the fun part of their job, and so they welcome that. Hey 'we're doing this great thing', do you want to give some money to help children in our neighbourhood', is a lot easier and a lot more fun than saying 'hey we've got a big roll of toilet paper on sale, two for a dollar. Do you want to go and get some toilet paper?' It's a no brainer. […]And instead of coming to work in a polo vest they get to wear these T-shirts. And this past year we had a lot of them wear it every day throughout the whole Red Nose Day programme, and the store managers allow them to do that afterwards for a couple of weeks. But it's nice to do for them."[M43]

Chapter 2 discussed how CSR can be a counter-weight to overloads in bureaucracy and technocracy, where social opportunities are perceived as weak, alienating or dull (Thyssen, 2011). Several more interviewee statements here show how CSR experiences could be discursively constructed to constitute a version of the workplace experience not as dull, but positive for organizational members. For instance, in the following statement we see how one CSR event was constructed as an experience of sociability: *"Red Nose Day, for example, they have these big get-togethers, and there are IT people, distribution centre people, medical people and finance people. And you're all standing up there with a Red Nose on having a good time" [M70]*. Finally, the following interviewee statement relates a CSR management leadership day involving celebrity guests modelled on a famous philanthropy U.S. organization referred to as We.[35] The excerpt shows how the meaning of CSR was not constructed through a discourse of how the firm was helping society, but rather as an opportunity to construct a positive version of

[35] For an explanation of We Day see: https://www.we.org/gb/ .

the workplace as offering a 'cool' social experience 'like a rock concert', with 'real life' and 'heart-warming' stories that organizational members 'wanted more of':

> *"…one of the greatest things we did that really got the message out, we had a mini We Day at our most recent Vegas meeting. […] So, we had some guest speakers come in. So, a couple of celebrities came in and a singer and they really, they kind of broke it into like the four pillars, and had people talk on each of the four topics and share real life stories how it was impacting. And, they showed videos, it was really cool. And it was like a rock concert, but it was really neat […] they wanted more of it. They were like 'can we do this'. I think there was some very heart-warming stories and it was pretty impactful."[M53]*

6.2.5 Practice Five: Constructing CSR Experiences for Self

The purpose of this sub-section is to explore how many CSR practitioners discursively constituted the meaning of everyday CSR experiences for self. We know that many identity scholars agree that organizations act as social sites for their members *"for realizing the project of the self"* (Grey, 1994:482), and that *"identities are constituted within organizationally based discursive regimes which offer positions, or epistemological spaces, for individuals and groups to occupy"* (Clarke et al., 2009:325). In this regard, the data explored shed light on the ongoing identity narratives constructed by interviewees from their experiences of CSR in the workplace. On this topic, the research study produced a large quantity of data, of which only a selection is presented in this sub-section. The analysis expands understanding of the potential significance of CSR to CSR practitioners for constructing in-progress positive self-identity work (Brown, 2015) that mitigates negative identities (Brown and Lewis, 2011).

From a functional perspective, scholars have noted how CSR supports employees to feel engaged and 'whole' in the workplace (Glavas, 2012). In the case study context, and consistent with my epistemological view, interviewee statements show how CSR practitioners' constructions of a positive self were made in connection with disassociations from unwanted identities. For example, the following interviewee's statement shows how being involved in CSR was constructed as working 'in service to something greater', providing fulfilment by

mitigating anxieties of being self-defined in terms of a daily task list, or just making profits for shareholders:

> *"From a personal stand point, it adds a fulfilment to the job that I don't think I would get if I weren't doing this kind of work. Anybody can come into work and do their job every day and if it means something and it is important. On a personal basis, when I know that I am coming in and I am making a positive impact, not just the day to day work and checking tasks off my list but it is in service to something greater, that means something to me and that gives me a sense of fulfilment which I think is important, and when I talk to a lot of my colleagues, they feel the same way. It makes them feel good to work for a company that is doing work beyond making a dollar for a shareholder." [M63]*

The theme of CSR as a pathway for disassociating from, or minimizing the impact of, a profit-making identity featured in other interviewee statements: *"… the CSR thing does make you feel good to be a part of it, that it's not all about the buck" [M40]*. And:

> *"It makes my job more meaningful. I'm really happy in general. I've never been one of those people who like my ex-husband it was all about make money. Go make some money, let's go make money it's great. That's not how I operate, so, I need to feel like I'm helping people in the position I'm in or else it's not interesting to me." [M83]*

Some interviewees constructed CSR as a mental safety net away from wider existential moral identity struggles and uncertainties, and the precariousness described by Butler (2009). For instance, in the next extract one interviewee constructed the experience of CSR as a form of refuge from a troubled world. CSR practices for this practitioner constituted a *'buffer from all of that'*:

> *"You know it's so closely connected to, it's an extension of my own personal values. And that's not just true for me; I think that's true for just about everybody who's here. You know, you get to go home at night; you get to put your head on this pillow knowing that you're engaged in something that has a meaningful positive impact. So all the cynicism and hopelessness that's in the world, the nightly news, social media, time*

lines, all those things, but for me it's almost a buffer from all of that. Because whether I'm talking about closing compensation gaps for women, or employing somebody with a disability, and telling that story how we're affecting people's lives, you know for me it's just that: you know that you're doing good, and you're doing well. It might seem a bit idealistic, but I think it's increasingly necessary. Otherwise, in this day and age where there is so much hopelessness everywhere you turn, you're trying to find some element of positivity, and it's harder to come by." [M91]

For this person the experience of CSR offered a reality distanced from cynicism and hopelessness. CSR in this instance was constructed as a safety zone, in which the psychological struggle for moral certainty had been overcome. In another interview excerpt below, we see how some CSR practitioners' statements constituted CSR as an opportunity to overcome fears of insignificance in the workplace, constructed as 'you get to be part of something so much bigger'. In the instance captured in this interview statement, we see also how a positive identity pathway was constituted in which the self (through the object of CSR) was constructed as more morally valuable:

"So being part of CSR in a large corporate organization means you get the power of over 300,000 team members, of hundreds and millions of customers. You get to be part of something so much bigger. But you also can pick where your passion is. So, for me, ending child poverty, that one really, really tugs at me. So, that's one that I can invest a little bit more of my time in because I feel passionate about it." [M44]

In constructing positive identities, some interviewee statements drew on company size and profitability to facilitate identities associated with more significant moral challenges at the global level, such as ending poverty:

"And so, when you think about the millions upon millions of impacts we've made as a company, [name removed] always likes to inspire with the - 'if WBA was a country it would be like X largest country in the world, with that GDP we can make the difference. We can eradicate cancer. We can help end poverty. We can do this as a company if we put our – if we put our resources against it'. That's inspiring and to also make money doing it, that's amazing. So, I feel good, I feel happy to work here, I'm proud of it, and I think there is just so much more we can do." [M71]

As this statement (above) shows, constructing favourable self-views was associated with achieving some level of being 'happy' and 'proud' and a level of satisfaction and integration of self in the workplace (Sveningsson and Alvesson, 2003). In this respect, statements show how some CSR practitioners constructed their CSR experience explicitly as facilitating integration between self and organization. For instance, the following interviewee described CSR as fitting 'into how I believe': *"I'm very committed and, you know, believer in it. I, you know, I want to be a good steward of you know the earth and the gifts that we have and, you know personally, it fits into how I believe, and I think that it's the right thing to do" [M01].* The next interviewee described CSR as 'consistent with where I want to be': "*I like how it is set-up, that Walgreens is pro-volunteering, pro-corporate responsibility, wants to be on the side of participating, if not leading that. So that's kind of consistent with where I want to be at this point in my career, with what kind of company I want to be a part of" [M02].* In the following extended extract, one interviewee described CSR as being able to do your job and follow your passions:

> *"I'm a huge geek for Walgreens, I love Walgreens and I was really glad that I got to stay with the company but do something that was also perfectly aligned with my personal interests. You know, it's pretty rare that you can do both of those I think with your job… you know, to be able to bring your personal interests or your personal passions to your work. From my experience that seems to be unique. You know, for most people it's like, you have your work and you earn your pay cheque and you do a good job and you take pride in it and then you have… you come home and you have your passions and you have your interests and you have your loves and so to be able to bring both of those together and stay at the same company that I'm so happy, it was a once in a lifetime opportunity, so very exciting."[M21]*

Instead of separating self and work identities (Jackall, 1988), the opportunity to develop an integrated sense of self at work can bring comfort (Sveningsson and Alvesson, 2003:1188), as well as indebtedness (Pellegrini et al., 2010). The following statement shows how integration of self at work (through the object of CSR) generated favourable constructions of the firm:

> *"[CSR] really helps me personally with job satisfaction. There was a while that I was looking for another job because I wanted to feel like I had some kind of touch to the*

world. Like, I do so many reports and I see the services are so helpful to people, but it's just like the numbers behind it, and I wanted to do something. And so, you know, being able to lead employee engagement activities and to participate in some [charity work] at Walgreens and have Walgreens sponsor some, it makes my, like it fills up my love cup. Because these are things that are so important to me and I know not everybody is as equally, you know, doesn't care as much as I do, or maybe they care more than I do, but to have your company do this and say 'hey we recognize that this is important to you, we recognize that people like to participate, we're willing to give our time away to do this'. It's huge. I know some newer millennial companies like they do a lot of employee, like CSR, to the point where everybody takes the day off and goes and cleans up a beach you know. But it's hard for a company like Walgreens and so even to let individual teams take time off to do activities, it's very appreciated, I mean it's a huge cost it really is." [M42]

In this final statement of this chapter, we gain insight into how differing forms of identity integration in the workplace may be connected to less agentive challenging of the firm by CSR practitioners. This is epitomised in the phrase 'it's hard for a company like Walgreens'.

6.3 Conclusion

This analysis shows how CSR practitioners enacted CSR within taken-for-granted understandings, rules and know-how related to how business strategy practices *ought* to be performed. Shove et al. (2012) argue that practices become established when they replace something, and that to replace something they have to offer something new. Findings from this chapter shed light on how context can render CSR virtually undetectable, and overpowered by strategy discourses. Such was the minimisation of CSR discourse to strategy discourse that some CSR practitioners demeaned CSR role identities in favour of identities more proximate to strategy. The only new element of practice arising from these findings appears to have been the opportunity for positive identity work. These findings shed light on the importance of localised strategy practices in shaping how CSR is constituted and how CSR strategizing unfolds. In particular, the findings suggest how strategy practices can 'capture' the agency of CSR practitioners locking individuals into observing localised strategy practices, and locking CSR practices into localised understandings of strategy practices.

7: CSR in Dispute

7.1 Introduction

> *"Every pharmacy in America until CVS did this, sold cigarettes, and they still do by the way [laughs]. So that's the real story behind it. It's no more complicated than that, and it's a very honest story about commerciality and care." Executive manager*

Despite CSR commitments that include combatting cancer, Walgreens stores in the U.S. still sell tobacco over the counter. Exceptions exist in cities where law has prohibited pharma-retail firms to sell tobacco, for example in San Francisco, Boston and Needham, Massachusetts. This chapter presents an analysis of how CSR practitioners discursively appropriated and justified Walgreens' official stance on continued tobacco sales, despite recognition of a moral dilemma, ethical or strategic contradiction. The data presented explores how CSR practitioners objected to the moral contradiction posed by continued tobacco sales by this healthcare provider, whilst simultaneously reproducing and sustaining it. The findings show how CSR practitioners discursively constructed themselves, through their varied responses, in many roles: as moral agents, helpers, strategists, apologists, and organizational protectors. Through the prism of this dispute, and the momentary glance the research affords, the case study offers insight into how CSR practitioners do CSR in a contested and messy discursive landscape.

The aim of this chapter is to explore how, during a moment of moral uncertainty, many research participants borrowed from familiar and taken-for-granted discourses defending and maintaining a version of the company as reasoned and morally virtuous. The analyses highlight how even when CSR practitioners constituted the dispute over tobacco sales as contradictory, lacking sense and 'difficult', they often still marginalised individual contestations in favour of statements that justified continued tobacco sales, reconstituting it as permissible, and in some circumstances as *good*. In other words, research participants' voices were contradictory, fragmented, apologetic and compromised. This finding is significant because scholars have suggested that if indeed the majority of employees in organizations tend to seek some sort of conformity (Hewlin, 2003), we might expect at least that a community of CSR practitioners would adopt a more disobedient discourse of critical indignation or quiet resistance on such an ethically anti-social topic (Alakavuklar and Alamgir, 2018; Antonetti and Maklan, 2016;

Lindebaum and Gabriel, 2016; Wickert and De Bakker, 2018). Instead, CSR practitioners' observance of localised taken-for-granted discourses supplanted their moral position, and despite their roles, they constructed justifications from familiar discourses that reproduced continuing tobacco sales. Moreover, many interviewee statements were constructed protectively constituting the organization as a passive bystander, absent of agency, simply doing that which was socially and politically expected. The point here is not to suggest that all interviewees reproduced a single discourse of justification of Walgreens' tobacco sales. Rather, the analysis offers a 'thick' description (Geertz, 1973) of the different, but familiar discourse fragments constituting the way interviewees in varied ways, and some more than others, discursively accommodated the controversy.

This chapter starts by detailing Walgreens' official discourse on tobacco (section 7.2), drawing attention to key themes and ambiguities. This section is largely descriptive in character and is not intended as a comprehensive or objective analysis of Walgreens' public tobacco discourse. Rather it offers a contextualization of the discursive context in which CSR practitioners at Walgreens were both immersed and captured. The next section (7.3) is organized anthropologically (Reay et al., forthcoming), that is to say, largely according to the conversational sequence of interviewees' talk as regards continued tobacco sales by the firm. A sequential presentation shows the protective nature of interviewees' statements during responses on the topic of whether it was significant that Walgreens continued to sell tobacco. The first sub-section (7.3.1) explores how CSR practitioners' statements often contested the logic of Walgreens' continued tobacco sales and constructed distance (the 'what') between themselves and the official discourse, via a 'this is not me' discourse (the 'who').

The second sub-section (7.3.2) explores how some CSR practitioners appropriated an official smoking cessation discourse via familiar and taken-for-granted repertoires of helping and caring for customers. Data here highlights how such repertoires, when combined with smoking cessation discourses, mimicked familiar situated understandings associated with Walgreens' identity as a healthcare firm (see chapter 4, sub-section 4.2.5), and individual identity desires as 'helpers'. The third sub-section (7.3.3) explores data showing how some CSR practitioners justified Walgreens' tobacco sales reproducing familiar customer choice discourses situated within wider cultural and political discourses that constituted the company (the 'who') as an innocent bystander following market rules (the 'what'). In the fourth sub-section (7.3.4), the analysis focuses on how CSR practitioners justified continued tobacco sales reproducing taken-for-granted strategy understandings regarding profit maximization, helping constitute themselves, as well as the organization and its leaders (the 'who') positively. In this final sub-

section, I explore statements showing how the continued sale of tobacco was constructed as a temporal 'problem', in which the firm and its agents (the 'who') were constituted as dealing with a difficult situation and as virtuous in their efforts to resolve it (the 'what').

As with the previous chapters, methodologically the analysis followed the phases outlined in the data analysis sub-section (3.4.2) in chapter 3 by which the initial thematic themes were analysed from the perspective of 'whos' and 'whats', and by drawing on Potter and Wetherell's typology of accounts (1987), which is well suited for analysing discourse in disputes and struggles involving justifications. Theoretically, the focus in this chapter on how CSR practitioners justified a moral dispute is guided, as in chapter 6, by the understanding of practitioners as *"defined by the practices in which they engage, or by which they are caught"* (Shove et al., 2012:70). I also draw on the concept of the moral self (for discussions on the moral self, see chapter 2: Brown, 2019; Tugendhat, 1993; Weaver, 2006), not as an isolated subject, but an agent constructing and constituting, as well as rejecting, social norms: a carrier of practices.

This chapter of my research findings contributes to literatures on inconsistencies in CSR walk and talk (Christensen et al., 2013; Schoeneborn et al., 2019), CSR hypocrisy (Hoffmann, 2018), virtue in strategizing (Tsoukas, 2018) and internal social criticism within organizations (Sonenshein, 2005). It sheds insight on the internal situated social practices of CSR practitioners in absenting and neutralizing moral agency (Weaver, 2006) on ethical issues in organizations (Umphress and Bingham, 2011).

7.2 Official Discourse on Continued Tobacco Sales

Here I describe Walgreens' official discourse on tobacco drawing attention to key themes and ambiguities. This section is largely descriptive in character and is not offered as a comprehensive or objective analysis of Walgreens' official tobacco discourse. Rather, it is a contextualization of the discursive context at Walgreens associated with the controversy. As a pharmacy and healthcare company, Walgreens' connections with tobacco companies and its continued tobacco sales have attracted public comment for some time.[36] During interviews for

[36]In 2010, for example, Americans for Non-Smokers Rights reported that: "Walgreens and tobacco giant Philip Morris filed restraining order requests against the law to prevent the implementation of the [San Francisco] city's tobacco-free pharmacy law. Courts denied both requests and allowed the law to go into effect as scheduled." [Available at: https://web.archive.org/web/20100522033905/http://www.no-smoke.org/learnmore.php?id=615, [retrieved 30.1.2018, via https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Walgreens, footnote 74].

this research study one interviewee recalled the debate going back 15 years. A notice titled 'Attention Walgreens Customers' of May 2010, asking Walgreens' customers to contact the San Francisco Board of Supervisors as it considered legislation prohibiting pharmacies from selling tobacco, illustrates some of the key discursive themes characterising this earlier debate:

> *This proposal will make it less convenient for you to shop for all your needs in one location in your neighborhood, while limiting your access to legally available products. The proposal will force smokers to liquor stores, tobacco shops, gas stations or other retailers that don't carry smoking cessation products and don't have pharmacists available for advice on quitting.*[37]

Mindful of Potter's notion of stake as *"a way of discounting the significance of an action or reworking its nature"* (2004:210), the text above shows how Walgreens countered the negative portrayal of selling harmful tobacco products with a positive portrayal of the firm offering smoking cessation and professional advice. In effect, the perception of harm and irresponsibility that the prohibition inferred on retail-pharmacies selling tobacco (and promoting and legitimizing tobacco consumption by furthering sales reach) was discursively substituted with a benign impression of the firm caring for individuals by helping them quit smoking. The second discursive theme the text foregrounded was the focus on Walgreens as a champion for customers and neighbourhoods, helping customers with 'convenience' and local 'needs' and keeping them from the reach of liquor stores, gas stations and other businesses. Again, the supposition here is that Walgreens cared about its customers' more than its competitors, and more, the reader is encouraged to think, than legislators. Constructs that personified the firm as caring for customers not only camouflaged the underlying core message of protecting Walgreens' footfall, they also obfuscated the proposition of an uncaring business surfaced by the new legislative proposal.

Despite conclusive scientific research pinpointing the harmful medical impacts of tobacco on individuals, some defenders of the practice have argued that U.S. retail pharmacies have always sold tobacco. Despite this, there are instances of retail firms exiting the tobacco industry, as did Target, one of America's retail giants, in 1996. Despite public pressure from state governments and increasing pockets of legislation curbing tobacco sales by pharmacies in the U.S., Walgreens has continued to sell tobacco at front of store and uncovered. Claims that this was

[37]See appendix 10.10, available at: https://web.archive.org/web/20101127082941/http://no-smoke.org/pdf/Walgreens-alert.pdf [retrieved 27.2.2019]

the norm for American retail–pharmacies were quashed in 2014, when one of Walgreens' leading competitors, CVS Pharmacy, announced an exit from tobacco sales, putting pressure on Walgreens to follow. As several interviewees signalled: *"…CVS who made a very bold decision to stop selling cigarettes as part of their purpose and what they stand and represent, and their values as an organization, I definitely think that heightens the awareness of that issue" [M10]*, and *"… you know, we had a competitor that exited, I think there was lots of evaluation as to whether it should be 'yes' us too. It's almost like you beat us to the punch" [M50]*.

From 2014 onwards, Walgreens' official tobacco discourse continued to stress the theme of smoking cessation, but also emphasized the situation's temporality. This focus on temporality constituted the nature of the problem not in terms of morality, but in terms of timing. For instance, The Chicago Tribune quoted one Walgreens' executive manager as saying: "*We do deliberate this on a regular basis, […] our main focus is to try to get people to quit smoking, and we provide a lot of opportunities in stores to do that […] we also provide (products) for consumers who decide they want to smoke."*[38] The next year, following the launch of the firm's CSR report and a shareholder meeting in New York, the Chicago Tribune reported another executive manager as saying:

> *Walgreens takes the decision to continue selling tobacco products "very seriously" […] We also respect the choices of our consumers to decide what they want to purchase […] We've reviewed this on a regular basis and it's always up for a review and decision down the road […] Nothing is final.* (26 January 2017)

During an interview for this research study in October 2017, another executive manager highlighted the 'short-term' nature of Walgreens' approach, shifting discursive focus from moral-ethical dimensions to that of organizing and sequencing:

> *"…at the end of the day [pause] Walgreens has sold cigarettes for 109 years. Because every drug store in America has sold cigarettes for 109 years [pause]. CVS took the commercial decision […], to stop selling cigarettes. It was at a point when they were being commercially very successful, and Walgreens wasn't successful. So, there was that competitive position that they took. […] They did that, and they've applied enormous pressure on the rest of us, including Walgreens, to follow them. We've decided to do other things with our money in the short-term."*

[38] 27 January 2016

CVS's exit from tobacco sharpened public minds about Walgreens' moral competence, its reasons for not exiting tobacco and its level of (ir)responsibility. These concerns, or public discourses circulating in the American press and at shareholder meetings, were remarked by some interviewees during the field research for this study: *"We still carry tobacco products in our stores. I am questioned on this at least once a week, every week [by those] outside of the groups I talk to, people at conferences, internal people who I talk to" [M13]*. Heightened moral anxiety regarding Walgreens' continued tobacco sales was captured by the following interviewee: "… *that's a whole big conversation. I mean CVS went out there years ago, and they're tobacco free. And that was a decision they really made and stood by" [M20]*. And:

> *"We all hate it. I mean all the CSR people say you know we can't, we can't like sugar-coat it. […] You can't like make it okay. You know you can't – you know with the wine you can say well there is benefits to wine you know like you can't do that with cigarettes, like there is no benefit to it. It's just like blatant make money like it's just pure we want to make money which is – which doesn't make you feel good." [M71]*

Subsequently, WBA's 2017 CSR report offered an official explanation of tobacco sales at Walgreens' stores in the U.S. In keeping with past discourses (described above), the text emphasized Walgreens' good character by focusing on the help and care provided to customers via smoking cessation products (see appendix 10.11). The text defended Walgreens' continued tobacco sales on marketplace grounds stating that: "*Tobacco has commonly been sold in many U.S. retail pharmacies, which is not the case elsewhere in the world."* The text minimised the controversial nature of pharmacy tobacco sales by claiming an inconsequential percentage of market share: "*we firmly believe that the most effective step we can take to help smokers quit is to address the root causes of smoking, which go far beyond the small percentage of smokers who access this product at pharmacies."* While the text encouraged the reader to consider Walgreens as removed from the usual controversies associated with the tobacco industry, WBA made no disclosure about the extent of its tobacco sales. Nor did the report disclose tobacco revenues that might have enabled readers to make informed judgements. Other aspects of tobacco sales not addressed in the report included an absence of measures to reduce visibility of tobacco in stores, such as voluntary display bans or removal from behind the cash register. No acknowledgement was made of the link between smoking and cancer, or any commitment to discouraging smoking more widely.

Finally, at the start of 2019 reports appeared in a number of leading U.S. newsfeeds regarding the illegal sale of tobacco in Walgreens' stores to minors. Unlike previous research on Walgreens' tobacco sales, which had mostly originating from not-for-profit organizations, this new research was conducted by the Federal Food and Drug Administration (FDA).[39] According to Bloomberg, the FDA had inspected 6,350 Walgreens' stores and found 22 percent selling tobacco to minors. Bloomberg also reported Walgreens had been fined 240 times since 2010 for such violations. In response, Walgreens made the following statement:

> *We have a zero-tolerance policy prohibiting the sale of tobacco products to minors and any employee violating this policy is subject to immediate termination. We require age verification from anyone purchasing these products, regardless of age, in all of our stores nationwide. While lowering the visibility of tobacco products in certain stores, we also continue to focus efforts on promoting cessation products and services, and all of our pharmacists and technicians are trained and certified on supporting any customer wanting to quit on their terms.*[40]

7.3 CSR Practitioners' Discourses on Continued Tobacco Sales

> *"…will [tobacco sales] last for the long term? It might hurt in the short-term, but for the long-term I think it would be something that would be accepted. We would recover quickly if I can put it that way. […] Don't put my name next to any of that." [M50]*

Analysis presented in this section explores key discourses characterising interviewee contestations and justifications as regards continued tobacco sales. The analyses are organized anthropologically (Reay et al., forthcoming), that is to say, largely (but not strictly), according to the conversational order of interviewee responses. Such a presentation helps show how interviewees constructed responses that were initially constituted by their own "*understandings, know-how, states of emotion and motivational knowledge"* (Reckwitz, 2002:249), but then subsequently modified. Included in these modifications were familiar and taken-for-granted discourses about the identity of the organization (and their purpose in it),

[39] Available at: https://www.bloomberg.com/news/articles/2019-02-07/fda-targets-walgreens-as-biggest-violator-of-youth-tobacco-sales [retrieved 22.3.2019]
[40] Available at: https://news.walgreens.com/press-releases/general-news/walgreens-statement-on-fda-letter.htm [retrieved 22.3.2019]

cultural and political expectations in which businesses in the U.S. are situated, and accepted practices associated with being a successful and strategic business.

7.3.1 Distancing Self

"It's personally a point of conflict within me. It's a difficult topic." [M04]

This first sub-section shows how CSR practitioners' statements often began contesting the logic and rationality of Walgreens' continued tobacco sales, constructing differing levels of distance between individual understandings and the official discourse. I term this distancing a 'not me' discourse. The aim is to explore how research participants' initial statements differed but were either consistent with societal discourses about the harmful effects of tobacco, or, with constructions of ambivalence on the topic. In this respect, many statements constructed the critical competence (Boltanski et al., 1984) and coherent understandings of social rights and wrongs expected in most communities (Sonenshein, 2005).

For instance, several statements show interviewees constructing distance between self and Walgreens' official tobacco discourse by invoking tobacco's link with causing life changing harm and death: *"And again that's an example of CVS taking a stand and we don't. Yeah, it brings us a lot of money, but you know, here we are happy and healthy yet selling stuff that kills people, it doesn't make sense to me"[M34].* On the other hand, data show how interviewees sometimes drew on personal experiences of death or life changing harm to family members or friends to constitute objection and construct boundaries between self and the official approach:

"I myself think that… I'm against smoking. My best friend, two of my best friends died because they smoked. And I'm godfather to one of his three daughters. And it's very sad that he's not here to see them growing and taking their place in society." [M84]

"I had a grandfather who died from emphysema. He said lots of…, not emphysema, he basically had lung cancer, and he was sick for a very long time and I remember going in there and seeing him waste away, and be on oxygen and some of those kind of things and he said 'don't ever smoke'. You know this is what happens when you do this. So

ultimately, I think it's a terrible habit […] so, it's a difficult space to be in. The cigarette piece is particularly important to me just because of what it's done to members of my own family." [M30]

In this latter statement moral discomfort with the official tobacco discourse can be seen in the phrase 'it's a difficult space to be in'. Such discomfort was not confined to those with full-time CSR roles, but extended across the sample group of interviewees:

"I think the dangers of second-hand smoke in tobacco, I think that's a conflict with what we are. […], it doesn't make any sense, you're not going to be healthy if you're smoking cigarettes or using snuff or using, chewing tobacco. I mean nothing good is going to come from that. […] when I grew up my father smoked, and then I convinced him to stop smoking when he was… What was he? In his 40s, and now my dad is 80, and he didn't get lung cancer, but what he's got is COPD."[41] *[M40]*

"I mean I'm very, very, very opposed to selling cigarettes. I think there's no good medical clinical reason to do that. And you know, there can be degrees of badness I guess. Because I think questioning cigarettes, well we also sell alcohol, we also sell other things that can cause…, and I'm not real wild about us selling alcohol, but cigarettes, I mean there is no, there's kind of no grey area, you can't." [M70]

Data show also how many CSR practitioners' statements stressed a contradiction or inconsistency about the company's approach to tobacco *vis-à-vis* its stated moral ambitions to end cancer (one key aspect of Walgreens' CSR strategy) or to be a destination for health and wellbeing: *"I'm against cigarettes okay. […] It's a great question. I think it's a really good question; it's almost litmus for doing CSR. Like the role of CSR. So, if you're really doing good, then why are you selling cigarettes?" [M93]*. Quotes detailed in Table 7, show further the different ways interviewee statements constructed continued tobacco sales as illogical, distancing self from the official approach.

[41] Chronic obstructive pulmonary disease.

Interview statements contesting the official tobacco discourse
"…I do think that there is a conflict. Especially when you know… one of the things that I've talked about was leveraging CSR as a tool to influence other corporations to act as good citizens." [M10]
"So, I think ultimately if we're all about you know being a pharmacy, health and wellbeing company, a pharmacy led health and well-being company, then it just doesn't seem to align with our objectives and our strategy, and where we should be going, as well as championing everyone's right to be happy and healthy and our brand purpose."[M50]
"…for me personally it doesn't make any sense to say, 'I'm selling you a packet of cigarettes up front, that is gonna cause you a healthcare problem, then I'm gonna give you a prescription in the back to get it treated when you come back'." [M60]
"I think particularly as we talked about our vision of being pharmacy led health, wellness and beauty, it seems a disconnect with that vision. Still, given if we want to focus on health and beauty that does not seem like an area of the business that is supportive of that long-term vision." […] "…I think it is a big area of contention as we talk to partners in the oncology space that we sell cigarettes. It definitely impacts our credibility in trying to be a champion for people who are dealing with cancer."[M31]
"It's like a purist brand thing you'd want it gone. It's really hard to rationalize. It's like really embarrassing…"[M71]
"From a healthcare perspective it's certainly something that our department has talked a lot about. I think that we also sell alcohol; we also sell a variety of products that as a pharmacist I think are not good, that I would never recommend." [M02]
"I don't think they should [sell cigarettes]. It just seems so counter intuitive to me… I mean when you walk into a Walgreens at the back behind the register, there's all these cigarettes, and then there's nicotine. So, it's very counter… It's almost hypocritical. Maybe that's a little harsh. But we're saying be healthy, be happy. Here's all these resources and tools to be happy and healthy. But here's something that could kill you…"[M42]
"So, people are looking at us – 'but you're saying you're happy and healthy, right? Happy and healthy mean…, this is not congruent with your message or your tagline by selling cigarettes, right'. […] From the company standpoint and leadership, is there a feeling that 'look if we're saying healthy perhaps, maybe'. What does that healthy mean to me?" [M52]
"I mean people are aware that we carry cigarettes and it seems very strange to them that part of our [CSR] strategy would be fighting cancer. Because you would think the first stop there would be remove cigarettes from your stores."[M13]
"Philosophically, I don't feel right, it's uncomfortable to be selling cigarettes and to be, in essence, a player in the health industry."[M33]
"But is it necessary for us to sell them? No. […] If you talk about healthy and happy, I mean it's not healthy to smoke cigarettes, so it doesn't really align with that. […] especially since we're focused on, we're from a community lens, when we're focused on kids and cancer, cigarettes definitely causes cancer. So, it kind of contradicts I guess our strategy in a way."[M53]

Table 7: Interview statements contesting the official tobacco discourse

In discussing Meyerson (2001), Creed states that social change agents must *"navigate ambivalence, seeking ways to remain true to one's selves, while avoiding the extremes of submissive silence and aggressive confrontation"* (2003:1506). Drawing further on Meyerson,

Creed also states they *"are constantly making difficult choices about when and how to speak 'truths' and raise issues that have been suppressed and when and how to remain silent without falling into a systemic collusion with their own co-optation and subordination"* (2003:1506). In my study, such ambivalence could be observed in interviewees' statements (see Table 8) with the use of words such as 'rough', 'complicated', 'difficult', or 'tough'. In some instances, interviewees constructed tempered 'not me' statements, for example: 'I don't love it', and, 'I'd prefer it if we didn't'. Brown and Coupland (2005) argue that such non-critical phrases allow individuals to disagree with the official discourse in ways that do not explicitly compromise impressions of corporate loyalty or individual identities as valuable business employees. At the same time, some statements in Table 8 (for instance, statements M01, M33 and M54) show how some interviewees constructed a lack of agency similar to that described by Potter and Wetherell in their typology of excuses. In this typology a denial of volition is characterised by utterances such as *'I would like to help, but I do not have the authority'* (1987:78).

A small number of CSR practitioners remained silent or avoided direct statements regarding Walgreens' continued tobacco sales. In some instances, avoiding a response might be interpreted as a form of self-censorship (Brown and Coupland, 2005), or protection against misspeaking on unrehearsed or unknown topics: *"I would leave that to the CSR experts" [M81]*, and, *"Occasionally you'll hear about the customer complaining about why do you sell cigarettes when you're a pharmacy type thing? But yeah, I don't really want to speak about that to be honest with you because I'm not 100 percent on that" [M74]*. In other instances, scholars have argued that not remembering (or claiming not to know anything as was the case in this latter statement) can constitute a denial of agency via amnesia (Potter and Wetherell, 1987). Refraining from responding might also be interpreted as a discursive move for avoiding the risk of negative judgements in the localised context (Goffman, 1959): *"…and it's very hard by some stretch. On the other hand, again, we sell things to adults. It's a legal product. I don't know. I have a personal opinion that I choose not to share here or in general" [M61]*.

Consistent with my epistemological approach, we cannot know the multiple motivations and intentions of individual distancing from the official Walgreens' approach to tobacco. However, we can observe how many research participants contested the rationality of the official approach and constituted themselves as moral agents understanding the harmful effects of tobacco and knowledgeable of how selling tobacco contradicted the firm's strategy and healthcare priorities.

Interview statements of ambivalence toward the official tobacco discourse
"Me personally? Well I think… I have mixed emotions…"[M50]
"I think it's a tough, you know, it's a tough decision. If it, if it were me I would, I would love it if we didn't sell cigarettes."[M01]
"I'm not proud that Walgreens sells cigarettes, it's not one of the things I'm proud about Walgreens, and – but I understand why we do sell cigarettes."[M71]
"That's tough for me because I've been operations for most of my career. And I know the impact that it will have on sales and yet now I'm in safety and it's so harmful."[M22]
"Oh boy. So, I'm a pharmacist right. So of course, yeah I don't love the fact that we sell cigarettes in our stores."[M32]
"It would be an easier brand conversation to have, not to have them, for me."[M72]
"So, it's complicated but I mean if you ask me today if I could wave a magic wand, I'd like to get us out of cigarettes as soon as possible."[M33]
"But me not being a smoker and knowing what they cause, I don't like it that we're selling them."[M43]
"Yes, this is a rough one. I like many people, would prefer that we do not sell cigarettes."[M63]
"So, it's difficult because I personally am ambivalent on that. Being pulled in both directions having both views on it. It's personally a point of conflict within me. It's a difficult topic, but as sort of a healthcare perspective I would like those products not to exist at all." [M04]
"I also love that you asked me about the cigarettes. I'm sure you could hear how I got on the proverbial fence. I'm trying to dance around that topic, because it really is one at the crux…" "For me, if we came out and announced tomorrow that we weren't selling cigarettes; I would feel good about that."[M44]
"It's a difficult one. But I think if it were me and I could have my way I would like to see us 5 years ago starting to go round certain states and certain markets on our own. So that we could point to that as an organization that we have a strategy, it's an active strategy where we are eliminating it on a state by state basis." [M54]

Table 8: Interview statements showing ambivalence about continued tobacco sales

7.3.2 The Helping Discourse

As detailed earlier in this chapter, the official Walgreens' response to pressure generated by CVS exiting tobacco sales was transmitted in official communications promoting Walgreens' smoking cessation products and programmes. As a point of context, one interviewee explained:

> *"I feel a lot of it was in a sense triggered by CVS. It was almost like a reactive approach. So, by CVS pulling cigarettes we felt like we needed a better story around well, obviously how we're still selling cigarettes. But like what else can we do? So that's where we're like well we need to have a smoking cessation programme. And that's what we worked on. But I say the visibility of it is still pretty poor." [M32]*

Unlike excuses which involve a denial of responsibility, justifications claim *"certain acts are in fact good, sensible or at least permissible in the circumstances"* (Potter and Wetherell, 1987:76). Data in this sub-section explores how CSR practitioners constructed justifications for Walgreens' continued sale of tobacco by constituting the smoking cessation discourse as a 'good deed'. The analysis shows how some statements discursively melded the smoking cessation discourse with familiar organizational repertoires (including symbols) connected to Walgreens' identity and moral status as a healthcare firm, in the business of helping and caring for others (discussed in chapter 4, sub-section 4.2.5). Statements referring to various forms of helping and caring, including advising, educating and counselling, show how these situated repertoires (Silverman, 2006) when joined with smoking cessation talk, mimicked a familiar identity and sense of worthiness associated with helping people. In so doing, this analysis draws attention to how appropriating the official smoking cessation discourse enabled on the one hand the construction of preferred moral self-identities, and on the other, the maintenance of a positive moral reality of the workplace.

For instance, in the following statement we see how one interviewee constructed the official tobacco discourse on smoking cessation (as an object) to plot, depict and embellish a preferred discourse of Walgreens as an ideal company. Of particular note is the way the figure of store pharmacist, a health professional figure often imbued with qualities such as trustworthiness and authoritativeness (Harvey and Adolphs, 2016), is introduced and described favourably facilitating the construction of the speaker's preferred version of reality:

> *"I think that we do a lot to help people stop smoking. We have all the…, not just the products, like the nicotine gum and the patches and all that, but we do have programs through our pharmacies that can help people stop smoking. Like if you went up to ... many people would go to their doctor I would hope if they're doing it, but some might ask their pharmacist, it might start there with the pharmacist – 'hey you know I'd really like to stop smoking'- and maybe they see the nicotine, because that's behind the counter stuff, I don't think you need a prescription for it, maybe they just might, it might catch their eye and they might ask the pharmacist, 'hey I've been thinking about quitting. Does that nicotine gum really help or does that nicotine patch,' or maybe the pharmacist can advise them there a little bit and say, 'you know yes'." [M01]*

In this excerpt above, smoking cessation products and the stature of the omniscient and beneficent pharmacist were constituted in ways that evoke a romantic idealized scene at the store, a scene very distant from that of one previous interviewee who described selling tobacco as "*it's just pure we want to make money" [M71],* or the public scandal of selling tobacco to minors. In this instance, and others (below), interviewee statements focused on smoking cessation as a positive 'thing', constructing it as a substitute for not ending tobacco sales. This tangibility of the official smoking cessation discourse (with its products and direct interaction with customers), speaks to Kress and Van Leeuwen's argument that the symbolic quality of tangible images appeals to individuals in constructing preferred realities and truths:

> *Seeing has, in our culture, become synonymous with understanding. We 'look' at a problem. We 'see' the point. We adopt a 'viewpoint'. We 'focus' on an issue. We 'see things in perspective'. The world 'as we see it' (rather than 'as we know it' and certainly not 'as we hear it' or 'as we feel it') has become the measure for what is 'real' and 'true'. (Kress and Van Leeuwen 1996:168)*

Many interviewees appropriated the smoking cessation discourse alongside helping discourses to constitute understandings of smoking cessation as a 'good' and kindly act by Walgreens. Of particular interest in the statement below is how the speaker constructed smoking cessation as 'beautiful', and how the word 'sure' conveys reassurance rather than assurance:

> *"…if we don't sell cigarettes, where do those people go to get help when they need the help to quit smoking, they won't get it at 7/11, they won't get it at the BP gas station, so by having them in our store buying those cigarettes, when they're ready to quit all of our people are trained on how to help them quit. And it's a beautiful avenue when somebody's ready, and I'm sure we have helped people quit." [M41]*

In the next quote, another interviewee drew on Walgreens' loyalty points for would-be quitting smokers to constitute a metaphorical personification of Walgreens as reinforcing 'good behaviour':

> *"I'm against cigarettes okay. But the fact is that we could through loyalty cards, through credit cards, we can basically print out cost savings for smoking cessation*

which we've done, there's actually loyalty points for people that sign up that have quit smoking, so, we reinforce good behaviours for that." [M93]

From their talk about smoking cessation individuals also constituted metaphorical portrayals of Walgreens as being (note the repeated personification) close and connected to customers: an empathetic coach. These semiotic constructions in which interviewees discursively drew on smoking cessation products as an object to objectify Walgreens' good standing and virtuosity, sometimes constituted Walgreens in a semi-pastoral role appealing to values of charity and caring. In the following statement we see how one interviewee constructed the customer as needing comfort 'we understand this [tobacco] is here', and in need of correction for transgression 'this is where we'd like you to go', and Walgreens as providing care and compassion 'we'll talk to you, we'll coach you':

"I do believe that having programmes going back to health and wellness that support cessation in every way, even if we continue to sell it, I think that makes a bigger impact because now you're speaking on an emotional level with your customer. You're saying we understand this is here, but this is where we'd like you to go when you're ready to go, and we'll talk to you, we'll coach you about it, etc." [M73]

In some respects, the semiotic language of smoking cessation enabled the construction by some interviewees of a semi-religious scene in which Walgreens was saving its customers from the perils of tobacco. This construction not only constituted continued tobacco sales as permissible, it justified it as necessary, as without tobacco sales Walgreens would not be able to 'help' its customers. The following two statements elucidate:

"We are essentially trying to dissuade people, this gives us access into who is buying cigarettes, so we then can provide services for them to help them quit. If you're going to smoke you're going to buy… if you're not… if we remove them from Walgreens, they're still going to buy them somewhere else. So, that doesn't solve the problem, and then, we don't know who is smoking, or who is using tobacco products, so, we can't then try to push these other services to help them stop smoking." [M13]

> *"And I think if we just stopped selling cigarettes I don't think it would have any impact upon the people who smoke. I think it would actually be negative, because we can identify them. If they go buy them in a garage, is the garage going to be interested in them? No, no they're not. The garage can't provide them with smoking cessation activity kits." [M84]*

Via the object of smoking cessation interviewees could also construct Walgreens as having a 'big role' in the 'health of those individuals', constituting a preferred reality of the organization as benefactor, not transgressor:

> *"…our role is to continue to educate, you know the smokers to quit smoking. And so, we still continue to play a big role in the overall elimination of smoking if you want or for the health of those individuals. But for us not selling the cigarettes to them and having them go buy their drugs somewhere else, or cigarettes somewhere else, is it really going to make a difference?" [M64]*

These constructions also facilitated differentiation from competitors, as one executive statement elucidates: *"We've grown our smoking cessation programmes much faster than CVS have done. So, we took a small amount of money that we could afford and invested in driving consumers to stop smoking in partnership with GSK and Pfizer and the numbers are very impressive there".*

Exploration of the data has shown how the official smoking cessation discourse not only created an object via which Walgreens' tobacco sales could be constituted as permissible, it also facilitated a justification of tobacco sales as necessary and 'good'. Constructing a 'good deed' via the object of smoking cessation, enabled in turn the objectification and maintenance of the organization as a benevolent agent, 'I'm sure we have helped people', with a noble purpose, 'we are essentially trying to dissuade people'. The analysis draws attention to how many research participants remade the organization in the image of a 'force for good' (as discussed in chapter 5). In this way, CSR practitioners' positive constructions about the motivations and impact of the company as regards smoking cessation marginalized and obscured wider ethical concerns associated with continued tobacco sales and the firm's business with tobacco companies.

7.3.3 Cultural and Political Discourses

> *"So, if you want to make the decision to drink a little too much, smoke a little bit too much, buy candy, fatty foods, if that's what the market wants we want to be able to provide that. […] For me, I kind of I'm of the opinion that people got to manage their own you know personal lives, and why should I…. I mean you know taking a stand on not selling something doesn't stop people from buying it." [M11]*

In this sub-section I explore data in which CSR practitioners constructed justifications for Walgreens' continued tobacco sales from familiar cultural and political discourses. These discourses constituted the company as objectively and rationally diligent, following accepted societal rules regarding the market, customer choice and democratic norms. In this respect, data show how distributed taken-for-granted discourses converged in CSR practitioners' statements forming a defence of the company's tobacco approach that protected a preferred reality of the company and its agents as both rational and virtuous, doing what circumstances heeded.

For example, many interviewee excerpts referring to customer choice discourses show how continued tobacco sales by Walgreens was often constructed as permissible and reasonable. In some instances, as the opening interviewee excerpt above and the one below suggest, statements constructed the customer disparagingly as making poor life choices, while Walgreens on the other hand was simply abiding by market and democratic norms. Potter and Wetherell (1987) have highlighted such discourses as appealing to both values and utilitarianism:

> *"I don't know that Walgreens should be the judge of what people buy. Some of our people want to buy cigarettes in our store. Some of our people want to buy fatty foods in our store. Some people want to buy condoms in our store. So, who are we to police what people can and cannot buy?" [M41]*

Constructions like the one above making false comparisons with other products constituted Walgreens as kindly and as 'serving' its customers. The statement below shows the pervasiveness of the customer choice discourse in justifying tobacco sales, while all the while constituting the firm as morally innocent with phrases such as 'we're just simply making it available':

"…it's a fine line. Like we're not people's mums, so I think if there's a demand… we're not out there promoting cigarettes, so if there is, you know a demand we'll have it available, just to basically serve our customers. We're not out there saying it is the right thing to do, we're not saying people should smoke, we're not endorsing it, we're just simply making it available." [M20]

The customer choice discourse also helped constitute a denial of Walgreens' agency (blame), as if Walgreens were a passive bystander on the subject. For instance, it is interesting to observe how in the previous and following statements, interviewees disavowed responsibility for the company's role in promoting or associating with the tobacco industry, constituting the customer as the responsible 'agent':

"So as far as cigarettes go I mean if that individual would want to purchase them I don't think that we need to block that. I think that you should be able to buy what you want, and I think that it would […] I'm pretty sure every smoker that exists though knows it's bad for them, right. And so, we're not, I don't think we're enabling them." [M72]

In constructing Walgreens as an objective and innocent agent, one speaker's statement referred to the capitalist system, making associations with values of freedom attesting the reasonableness of Walgreens' approach:

"But we also you know not only the cigarettes but we're selling sugary beverages and alcohol and products that are over the counter aisles that have not been proven to be helpful at all, and are a waste of money, but everybody sells them, or the consumer still wants to buy them. So, I kind of just take the capitalist point of view of, not necessarily supply and demand, but it's a free country and if you want to purchase it then you should have the opportunity." [M02]

In another example, one interviewee statement harnessed the strength of the customer choice discourse in the U.S. to constitute a similar sense of objective reasoning, and a role for the company as helper via education. Of note is the word 'allow' which seems at odds with the idea that customers are 'free' agents:

"I want to say it's uniquely American, but I feel I can't say it's uniquely American, because it's not. But this idea of choice, this concept that people have free will and we are not trying to dictate people's lives for them or the choices that they make, we simply offer the different options and provide education about those options and then allow them to make the decision that they feel is best for them." [M13]

These constructions excused Walgreens of its moral responsibilities on tobacco sales by constituting the firm as a reasoned and obedient follower of political and cultural rules, and by constructing would-be firm action to exit tobacco as an act of high mindedness, at odds with cultural and political values. Although diverse, the statements show how preferred or taken-for-granted discourses were reproduced to constitute the organization as a rational actor, on the right side of societal norms and the law, acting as a *good* citizen.

7.3.4 Strategy Discourse

In this sub-section I explore data showing how many justifications for Walgreens' continued sale of tobacco were constructed from taken-for-granted discourses associated with being strategic and ensuring successful profit maximization. In some instances, these discourses constituted a sudden exit from tobacco sales as non-strategic, irrational and harmful to the business, individual jobs and departmental budgets (i.e. colleagues' livelihoods). Whereas continuing to sell tobacco was constituted as acceptable, even intelligent, and responsible. The analysis shows how in reproducing these discourses CSR practitioners' statements privileged understandings of profit maximization over moral and ethical concerns. The findings show how even though in earlier statements many interviewees contested continued tobacco sales as morally or strategically contradictory (sub-section 7.3.1), many CSR practitioners observed and reproduced widely circulating assumptions about the talismanic power of strategy and its promise of success. The following account shows how one CSR practitioner appropriated the strategy discourse to constitute a reasonable and 'best' approach to the problem:

"I'm part of the senior leadership, so we have a senior leadership meeting once a quarter. We just had our last one in January, and […] at almost every single one of those someone asks that question, 'how long are we going to sell cigarettes?', and to me [one executive manager] gave the best answer that I've ever heard to that. Which

was basically the same thing: he said, 'we'll answer it two ways', because he's a pharmacist, right. And he said 'if I put on my pharmacist hat I would stop selling cigarettes today. It's evil and it's wrong and we shouldn't be doing it. But as [an executive] of this company', he said, 'if I do that we have you know a 500 billion, or 50 million dollar or whatever it is decrease in revenue tomorrow. Do you want me to take 50 million dollars out of all your budgets? Because that's what we would have to do if we stopped selling cigarettes tomorrow' […] 'and the way that we can compensate with that is by doing this and this and this and this'. And he went on to talk about things that could generate that 50 million dollars in revenue and basically kind of challenged Group to say, 'once we can make this 50 million revenue we can show this growth here, then we will stop selling cigarettes.'" [M70]

This extended extract shows how exiting tobacco was constructed as an apocalyptic business scenario (or burning platform), primarily using the word 'tomorrow' to suggest impending disaster and business failure. In this context, exiting tobacco sales was categorised as harmful and unacceptable. Showing how practitioners are carriers of practice and defined by the context in which they are captured, some research participants, knowingly or unknowingly, constituted individual subjectivities as conforming to local strategy practices (as discussed in chapter 6). The following statement sheds some insight: "*But I feel like, yeah I guess, I can respect the fact that we are still a business, and I can be a part of working around that as opposed to seeing that as a barrier like 'well, I can't do my job if we still sell cigarettes, that has to be number one'" [M02]*. The following two statements draw further attention to how some CSR practitioners constituted selves as observant of the local strategy discourse privileging profitability. The statements also show how not following accepted strategy understandings could be constituted in context as being un-business like or unintelligent:

"…if we don't sell it, they're going to go to a gas station, they're gonna go to a convenience store, so we want to make sure that decision, whether it's a business decision, and again I'm still a business guy regardless, all these pieces are going to be in harmony working together, probably the business decision at the moment is what's the impact on budget perspective, how do the numbers look, and it looks like impactful." [M60]

"…I understand, we are a business and we do have a responsibility to shareholders and we have a majority of shareholders who don't want them removed until we can replace that revenue. And from a business perspective, I intellectually understand it." [M13]

In this respect, the following statement is interesting as the speaker distinguishes between a personal opinion, and another opinion for the 'market place': *"So, I don't think over the long-term it is critical, and I don't think it is something we should be doing. That's, since this is in confidence, that is not the answer I would give in the market place but that is the way that I have had to justify it to myself, if you will" [M63].*

In this way and despite strong contestations to continued tobacco sales (in sub-section 7.3.1), several CSR practitioners, including those with full-time CSR roles, reproduced a profitability discourse in which they also constituted themselves as sensible and agreeable strategy practitioners:

> *"And I think that they're making the fiduciary responsible decision. If they just made an emotional decision and you know, 'Yeah that's fine. Let's cut tobacco. Everybody's right let's get it off our shelves,' we do still have pay cheques that need to be written. There are still bills that need to be paid… um… there's still stockholders that we have a responsibility to. So, if we did just pull it off the shelves without any plan B or without any backup I think that would be irresponsible." [M21]*

Discursively these statements constructed a trade-off, which as one interviewee suggested above might be a false trade-off, between tobacco revenues or business failure. In this context, several interviewee statements contributed to a steady marginalization of moral concerns in favour of a sanctioned discourse that promised success for the business and its employees. Potter and Wetherell refer to these justifications as appeals to a higher authority, in the sense that the 'rules' stipulate it has to be this way (1987:78):

> *"I don't like it that we're selling them. But I understand the business behind them. […] From a business standpoint, as a traffic driver, I think it's very important. It sucks that we do. I think most people will agree with that, but I don't want to call it a necessary evil, but from a traffic driver (standpoint) they're great to have in the stores. Obviously, there's a lot of money in it and they don't want to lose that business. The same reason we brought liquor sales back, we wanted the business, we wanted the traffic, losing those customers to other businesses that had that in their stores. So, from a business standpoint, it's a good decision." [M43]*

"You've got so much in sales in that category that if you're going to take that out you have to replace that with something else, as far as sales for the business. So, I think now, it's just trying to be good to the shareholder quite frankly. Because if we exit cigarettes you know it's a huge impact on the bottom line." [M50]

"And so, I want people to be healthy, but I think being that we're a company that has shareholders and has a board that we have to listen to their direction. I understand the comments people make and how they're conflicted and the discrepancy that it gives. But it is a large source of income." [M22]

These varied justifications constructed from strategy discourses also constituted the problem of continued tobacco sales as being governed by the rules of the game and set by some higher authority that stipulated it was necessary (Gomez, 2015):

"That was just a marketing decision. I think that there's probably a little bit of... I don't know maybe I can make an analogy of holding your nose and voting for Brexit. Or holding your nose and voting for Trump. Holding your nose and putting cigarettes on the shelf. [Laughs] I think there are some necessary evils that could easily be questioned by others." [M40]

Another feature of the strategy discourse was that it constituted the moral question of why Walgreens continued to sell tobacco not as a moral concern pertinent to the company's responsibilities, but as a matter of temporary strategic priority. Such constructions meant *the company* could still be constituted as good: "*...so I think you'll see over time us get out of the business. But for now, I hope, I think that we take those funds and use them for a better purpose," [M14]*, and, *"...in the short to medium term, until we figure out how to get out of the cigarette, how we sustainably get out of the cigarette business, I would rather be here selling cigarettes and doing all the good that we are doing in other places than not exist at all," [M63],* and *"I think getting rid of the products over time will be important to us to demonstrate that we don't endorse products that are bad for you."[M64]*

In constituting continued tobacco sales as a temporary problem, not a reflection of the firm's fundamental moral competence, a positive discourse of the firm's leadership as rational, worthy and doing the right thing was sustained: *"I don't think they've ever said, 'no we're always going to sell them'. I think it's something that's still a little bit of a work in progress. […] As we continue to head down that road things like this will be discussed," [M30].* Statements in Table 9 show further how temporal constructions helped maintain a more positive reality, despite the reality of the tobacco dispute. In these statements continued tobacco sales were constructed as a circumstantial snag, a mishap, a sort of wicked problem which would 'definitely' be overcome, preserving preferred overall constructions of the workplace setting as a morally *good* one.

Interview statements framing continued tobacco sales as temporary
"And I think they're very close to the point where enough people have aligned on the fact that it has to be gone. […] So, I think at some point it will get, sales will become low enough that it will not be a big factor to remove it."[M22]
"I mean I think [the executive] has said publicly, you know in a few years, odds are we'll move away, we just haven't had the chance to do it yet." [M72]
"I think in time the cigarette portion will change. I think maybe it's wishful thinking, but I think that portion will change."[M43]
"I think we will get out of it, as we look at other revenue streams and as we grow as a company, either through choice, I hope through choice because I know [the executive] does not like cigarettes either in our stores, I think through choice we will make the move." [M63]
"I was at a conference just the last few days and it was a retail technology conference. And other peers from retails and we got on the subject people ask, you know, how long are you guys going to continue to sell cigarettes? And my answer was over time we'll probably not. I think we need to figure out a way to get there from a business standpoint." [M64]
"So, I think that if we were starting a business again would we start selling cigarettes? Answer definitely no. In the fullness of time will we stop selling cigarettes, yes most definitely we will. But we're on this journey…"[M84]

Table 9: Interview statements framing continued tobacco sales as temporary

7.4 Conclusion

This analysis of CSR practitioners' different but shared contestations and justifications about Walgreens' continued tobacco sales shows how many interviewees appropriated privileged localised taken-for-granted discourses, displacing and marginalizing ethical ones. In this respect, the analysis draws attention to the role of middle managers with formal CSR responsibilities in reproducing and maintaining corporate irresponsibility, even in a CSR context. Of note is the way the familiar and taken-for-granted constituted and maintained the firm and its key agents, dignifying their actions. Moving from potential moral agent, the

analysis shows how research participants also assumed positions of moral bystanders, moral apologists, strategy defenders, organizational champions, even defenders of democracy, transitioning from a moral position to taking up various compromises and contradictory accommodations. That this is a reflection on the fragmented individual, constituted precariously (Brown, 2019), possessing high degrees of plasticity (Boltanski and Thévenot, 2006:16) is a discussion I take up in chapter 8.

8: Discussion

8.1 Introduction

This chapter is structured to reflect the methodological and core theoretical perspectives that drove the journey of this research study. These readings are intended to facilitate the reader's interpretative understanding of the findings which emerged from the process of research, analysis and writing up. Each reading discusses the findings in chapters 5 to 7, applying nuanced perspectives and illuminating the insights offered by differing theoretical constructs as Stake described, *"the researcher is permitted, no obligated, to indicate how the findings might be extrapolated, how they could be interpreted in various circumstances, and how they accommodate theoretical discourse"* (1995:93).

These readings are intended to facilitate an exploration of the insights unique and distinctive to the case study and the consideration of these insights within the context of relevant scholarly practice-based and discourse-based discussions. The readings also broach micro-isolationism (Seidl and Whittington, 2014) by discussing the insights the case study offers for wider managerial and sociological debates about the nature of agency in organizations and the way discourse influences organizing in organizations. Throughout, the readings reflect my engagement with the CSR literature and particular debates as regards how CSR is constituted, strategized and practiced in organizations, and how these processes effect CSR outcomes.

The first section (8.2) interprets the research findings from the case study perspective. To do this I explore the findings via two questions raised by Tsoukas (2009). The first question is 'what is going on here?' And the second question is 'what is this a case of?' I explore these questions in relation to a key finding from the case study, the identity centric nature of CSR discourse in the case study context, and the interfacing of identity with CSR as an opportunity for positive identity work (Brown, 2015). The second section (8.3) develops an interpretation of the case study findings from the perspective of strategy as practice and practice theory. The main focus of this section is to discuss how CSR discourse was overwhelmed by strategy discourse, debilitating the enactment of new CSR practices by confining CSR practices and practitioners to following existing understandings and knowledge. The third section (8.4) follows a discourse theoretical lens to discuss the case study findings in the context of wider

discussions about the nature of CSR discourse. Building further on the constitutive approach to CSR discourse, this section discusses the findings of the case study in the context of CSR as a discursive object, a flexible resource for constituting, legitimizing and stabilizing uncertainty. The first sub-section (8.4.2) discusses an interpretation of the findings as a narrative form of legitimacy making, by which CSR practitioners construct legitimacy by protagonizing, narrativizing and moralizing the organization. In the second sub-section (8.4.3) I adopt Boltanski and Thévenot's (2006 [1991]) sociology of critical capacity, to discuss the findings as an example of CSR as compromise making, exploring how different accommodations, compromises and simulacrum at the individual level influence the ongoing becoming of an organization's moral competence.

8.2 A Case Study Reading

8.2.1 Introduction

Case studies offer a rare opportunity to delve deeply into organizational phenomena. This case study is especially interesting and worthy of academic attention (Siggelkow, 2007) because, as discussed in chapter 3, the sample group of research participants was atypical of a large complex corporation and the case study context intrinsic on account of the new CSR strategy introduced in 2014 (Stake, 2000). Remembering that to date, the majority of extant research into CSR implementation has been based on large sample groups of individual CSR practitioners spread across many different organizations and sectors (see for example Carollo and Guerci, 2017; Carrington et al., 2018; Dahlmann and Grosvold, 2018), this case study offers a rare glimpse of the organizational discourses, understandings and rules, shaping CSR practices in context. Another key feature is the focus on CSR practitioners with formal CSR responsibilities, as middle managers rather than CSR professionals or consultants.

In this first section (8.2) of my discussion I guide my interpretation of the case study's connections with wider academic debates by following Tsoukas (2009a) proposal that the critical epistemological question in case research is to determine what is the status of the 'particular' findings from the case study *vis-à-vis* the general knowledge that is already known about the phenomenon under study? In demarcating the 'particular' Tsoukas (2009a) pinpoints the need to ask: 'What is going on here?' Of the 'general', Tsoukas (2009a) suggests asking: What is this a case of? The aim of this section is to explore these two questions with relevance

to the key finding of this study, that is, the identity centric nature of CSR discourse at Walgreens. The aim of this initial interpretation is also to illuminate subsequent interpretations offered in this discussion chapter (in sections 8.3 and 8.4).

8.2.2 What is going on here?

One interpretation my analysis offers is insight into appropriation of CSR discourse as a 'comfort' resource, even a form of catharsis, via which CSR practitioners constructed a preferred, positive and more integrated version of self-identity at work (Brown 2015 and 2019). A number of interviewee quotes showed how CSR practitioners at Walgreens drew on individual involvement in CSR to constitute existential identities disassociating self from antagonistic discourses of 'hopelessness' and despair perceived elsewhere in the world, or the company (see in particular chapter 5 and chapter 6, sub-section 6.2.5). Recalling how Sveningsson and Alvesson argue that *"individuals are assumed to strive for comfort, meaning and integration and some correspondence between a self-definition and work situation"* (2003:1188), this interpretation of CSR as offering comfort has also been observed by other scholars empirically (Costas and Fleming, 2009; Hengst et al., 2019), and theoretically (Feix and Philippe, 2018), but is less well discussed in terms of a form of retreat or refuge from the machinations of the company, or social stigma of corporate work (Fleming and Jones, 2013:71). In chapter 5, the analysis showed how CSR discourse resonated with research participants by providing a moral, sometimes spiritual discursive space where they could constitute and sustain a preferred version of the organization, and how they discursively arranged constructions of the past, the future, stakeholders and objects to materialise this preferred reality. In chapter 6, the analysis highlighted how performing CSR practices helped some CSR practitioners constitute a more positive, beneficial reality of self and colleagues, against a backdrop of antagonistic discourses that might suggest they were automatons making profits for shareholders, not individuals with a purpose.

As noted previously, Mason (1959) predicted that the greatest questions facing business corporations in the future would be philosophical ones (not economic ones). By this logic the greatest questions facing individual corporate managers of different types and rank would also be of a fundamentally philosophical nature. The level of expectation on middle managers to influence a firm's moral competence (see for instance Anthony, 1998) also draws attention to the symbolic nature of the middle manager figure as potential embodiment of an organization's moral competence. Taking account of these considerations, we might expect individuals would

position their identities as proximate or distant from an organization depending on their perception of its moral competence. We might also expect that they would, drawing from Searle (2008), constitute the organization in ways that proximate it toward their desires of its (perceived) moral competence, expunging moral anxieties in the process. Considering the moral self as constructed through identities and concern for how we are seen and judged by others in society (Knights and Clarke, 2014; Tugendhat, 1993; Weaver, 2006), then sustaining the integrity of a preferred version of the organization and of one's moral self in the organization, might become, we can theorise, a key focus for CSR practices by CSR practitioners who are also middle managers. Following this logic, data (see in particular sub-section 6.2.5) show how CSR discourse became in the case study context a flexible resource via which some interviewees crafted powerful self-identities, not just as ideal business subjects of the organization (Alvesson and Willmott, 2002), but as *good* business subjects for society. One way to interpret these findings is to view the individuals as realizing idealistic ambitions. However, based on our knowledge of identity construction (Hall, 1996) another way is to view the individuals as constructing a positive life world in the presence of a liminal 'other' based on antagonistic discourses associated with the firm specifically, and corporations generally. Such theorising illustrates how discursively 'aspirational CSR talk' (Christensen et al., 2013) may in some contexts connect more to individual desires for exorcism rather than progress.

As identity work is ongoing and dynamic (Brown, 2019), these preferred constructions once imagined, may be maintained and reproduced by individuals to ensure anxieties (Knights and Clarke, 2014) about being 'cogs in a wheel' 'checking boxes', or, it being 'all about the buck' are minimised in favour of a positive self. In this respect, the analyses show the importance of materiality, rhetoric and narrative in the quest to dynamically construct CSR discourse in ways that consolidated associations of self with *good* acts, and simultaneously disassociated antagonistic discourses inconsistent with a preferred moral self. In this paradigm of moral self-preservation, CSR practitioners constructed a preferred discourse that resonated with their moral desires (chapter 5), encouraged (but did not challenge) others to identify with the organization in a similar way (chapter 6), and insulated themselves from the consequences of antagonistic moral acts (chapter 7). From the perspective of protecting the moral self these practices make sense, though from other perspectives such practices generated inconsistencies and incoherence, distortions and inconsequentiality. This view of a fragmented or contradictory self (but narratively coherent) resonates with scholarly identities debates and empirical studies in the identities literature that have shown how individuals develop positive pathways to reconcile and dignify work identities (Brown and Lewis, 2011; Dutton et al., 2010), often as a response to adverse contexts (Ashforth and Kreiner, 1999; Terkel, 1975). Following this logic, CSR practitioners in the case study context can be seen as self-selecting into CSR work as a way to

construct integrated and positive moral self-identities in what may appear to them as an otherwise dirty, fragmented, spent or instable moral landscape (Pullen and Rhodes, 2008). Doing CSR may also offer a form of identity truce where individuals can ignore the more hegemonic qualities of the organization (Brown and Coupland, 2005). Expanding on the theme of an identity truce, all truces have a price. In the case study context, one way to interpret CSR practitioners' multiple accommodations and agentive manoeuvres to justify and protect the company on the question of tobacco is as the price for a fragile truce, which in time would be lifted or not needed, as suggested by interviewee temporal statements regarding the continued future of tobacco sales.

The case study context illustrates how the construction of positive moral identity pathways and the discursive reproduction of such pathways whilst enacting CSR practices produced a type of self-enclosure. As discussed in chapter 2, Tsoukas (2018) explains self-enclosure as made up of self-interest on the one hand, that is how performing practices become the main locus of identification (Creed and Scully, 2000; Glynn 2008; Howard-Grenville et al., 2013). And on the other hand, self-referentialism which is how discursively performing practices tend to generate a self-referential life world (Von Foerster, 1984; Luhmann, 2000), or a space in which individuals take control of defining and reproducing their realities. Scholars taking a psychoanalytic perspective have argued that the sense of infinite power of large organizations contrasts the individual's infinite vulnerability, and one way to cope with such vulnerability is to subordinate the self to the organization in exchange for its protection (Gabriel, 1999:89). On the other hand, experiences of despair, entrapment, power inequalities and injustice in the workplace may also give way to fantasies in which employees remould reality in their preferred and desired interests (Gabriel, 1995), *"turning facts into stories and cast themselves into worthy roles of hero, survivor, victim or object of love, thus affording themselves some consolation and pride"* (Gabriel, 1999:105). In the case study context, such fantasizing showed itself in the story about the Californian bounty hunting government officials. The interesting point to note first, is how CSR discourse lent itself to fantasy in some instances in the case study context, and second, how self-enclosure seemed to enable maintenance of such fantasizing by obscuring reality. Taking this interpretation further, we might theorise how deeper power inequalities in an organization combining with antagonistic discourses may lead to some organizational members discursively crafting CSR as fantasy in an effort (of violence or love) to turn acid to alkaline, so to speak.

As well as working on self-identities, the research findings shed light on how CSR practitioners invoked CSR to construct preferred shared identities constituting collective identity-relevant

narratives and in-progress stories and story fragments (Brown, 2006) in which Walgreens was protagonized as a good (morally virtuous) business organization. Although not a narrative analysis, the findings show how CSR practitioners' varied, though recursive efforts (drawing on both talk and text) to bring into being a preferred social reality of Walgreens facilitated a distributed ongoing meta-conversation (Robichaud et al., 2004) or grand narrative (Fenton and Langley, 2011). Illustrating how such narratives are in a state of constant becoming with other competing narratives about the organization's identity (Brown, 2006), the findings showed how CSR practitioners' justifications for Walgreens' continued tobacco sales remade Walgreens not as a corporate transgressor, but as a trustworthy corporate abiding by rules set by others. In this reconstruction, CSR practitioners collectively remade a preferred social reality by borrowing from other narratives, such as imminent peril from financial collapse (the affordability discourse) and the defence of a golden age of allies and traditions (the customer choice discourse). It follows that if the narrative archetype is of rebirth, as data at times suggested in the research context (see sub-section 5.2.1) then key agents, stakeholders and symbols would be constituted to emphasize the new *good* organization. Accordingly, the data illustrated how power and stakeholder positions were affirmed to fulfil the quest of being *good*. In this way, findings from the case study shed insight into how CSR discourse appropriated for facilitating positive identity work might encourage processes of organizing concerned with working endogenously. These processes would be preoccupied with reconstituting the new within existing or familiar power arrangements, rather than working beyond existing arrangements.

In exploring further preferred realities constructed by some CSR practitioners from CSR discourse, we can agree with Bowles (1989) that CSR practitioners were in the case study context engaged in constituting a creative response to the future of society (May 1975), as so well suggested in the interview excerpt quoted at the opening of chapter 5. According to Bowles (1989), such attempts are to be found or originated in the modern workplace as a consequence of the degradation of work and the absence of other spiritual opportunities elsewhere in society since the demise of religious meaning and belief systems. Bowles argued that a new mythology[42] was required to allow *"people to participate more fully in their work lives and social lives generally,"* and enable them to *"...perform his/her heroic adventure in transcending the day to day, and often empty encounter with life"* (1989:418). In this mythology or life world, Bowles stressed that *"self-potentials, both cognitive and affective, can be exercised and where the action of operating on the environment, as opposed to being merely subject to it, allows at some level, a sense of purpose and well-being"* (1989:416). In constructing a better reality, CSR practitioners constructed themselves as agents in two ways. First, they constructed themselves

[42] Bowles adopts a meaning of myth not associated with mysticism but derived from Leeming (1981) as *"the manner in which meaning is given to life of individuals and societies"* (1989:407).

as offering other managers opportunities for differentiation and escape from what they perceived as anxieties of failure or insignificance (sub-section 6.2.2) (Rank, 1983 [1932]). And second, they constructed themselves as enacting their preferred CSR world, or mythology, of how a *good* company ought to be experienced by others (sub-section 6.2.4). In this sense and understanding realities as discursive constructions (Searle, 2008), in offering (discursive) opportunities to enact and experience their mythology, CSR offered CSR practitioners the chance to enact their myth, almost independently of CSR outcomes accomplished on behalf of the organization.

In this sense, the analysis sheds light on how CSR may in some contexts become confined to the boundaries of the organization, with references to external goods and outcomes only symbolically required to confirm an internal reality (we are reminded how some CSR practitioners simply referred to working for a mysterious 'greater' good). In these circumstances, CSR success would become confined to meanings derived from internal relations to others (Elias, 1985), as so vividly suggested in the case study by the We Day account (sub-section 6.2.4), and the construction of the company CSR rock concert. Interestingly, this perspective raises the possibility that the larger the organization the greater the possibility of enacting, via CSR, endogenous versions of one's individual (CSR) mythology within the boundaries and scope provided by the organization. In this paradigm (of We Days, rock concerts and get-togethers), CSR was constituted in the case study context as a relational resource between one employee to another, and between employee and organization, not exogenously between organization and society or external stakeholders as argued through stakeholder theory (which doesn't mean to suggest no external stakeholders engaged with the firm).

This observation on endogeneity accords with scholarly accounts of the company as "*natural universal self"* (Bondy and Charles, 2018:1), viewing external stakeholders as 'others' or marginalized. It also sheds insight on the types of context which might (de)construct a tendency toward stronger or lesser identity centric CSR in which alternative voices, such as the inaudible voice of society and environmentalism throughout the data set collected for my study, struggle to become heard. Tsoukas reminds us that case studies *"are opportunities for potentially extending our hitherto understandings of the phenomenon at hand"* and that, *"the particular is not subsumed into the general: it rather further specifies the general"* (2009a:288-9). In this respect, this discussion has suggested, not that individual identity work is central to the construction of CSR strategizing. Rather, it suggests that in certain circumstances (concerning a firm's past ethical record, the integrity of its leadership, its sector, and its size) CSR discourse is

a flexible discursive resource middle managers with formal CSR responsibilities (as well as others) may use to cope with different antagonistic discourses. In such circumstances, CSR strategizing can assume a self-enclosed identity centric orientation in which CSR practices reside more with self, offering an interesting perspective on CSR inertia.

8.2.3 What is this a case of?

Another interpretation of the case study findings is that this is an example of identity regulation, of allowing middle managers to *"just be themselves"* (Fleming and Jones, 2013:71), encouraging individual objectives to align with corporate objectives and *"self-images and work orientations that are deemed congruent with managerially defined objectives"* (Alvesson and Willmott, 2002:619). The most salient manifestation of such identity alignment in the case study context was the followership of strategy discourses. Findings in chapter 6 showed the many ways individuals constructed themselves as CSR practitioners, as well as their CSR practices, as constituted within and by the localised understandings and rules of strategy. The findings also showed how some interviewees discursively positioned themselves positively in accordance with the identity constructions executive managers offered of the workforce as a 'force for good'. And how they also followed identity constructions offered by executive managers of themselves as corporate leaders, enabling executive leadership and followership integration processes (Denis et al., 2002).

In constructing CSR within the main business strategy, CSR practitioners crafted CSR practices and the meaning of moral agency within those discourses made available to them. In other words, CSR practitioners constructed and sustained a discursive binary regulation of the meaning of CSR, in which CSR within accepted understandings of strategy was constituted as 'good', 'intelligent' and 'responsible'. Whereas CSR outside of these understandings was constituted as 'fluffy', 'pie in the sky' or 'goofy'. From the perspective of Searle (2008), we might say CSR was in the context of the case study concerned more with bringing into being strategy and its associated organizational arrangements, rather than CSR. As noted in the findings chapters, with the exception of one or two differing voices (see interviewee quotes at the end of sub-sections 5.2.3 and 5.4.2), the data generated an impression of collective observance of the identities locally available. In some instances, the opportunity to take up these identity positions appeared to also encourage positive organizational identity association evinced as devotion (Kjærgaard and Morsing, 2018), gratefulness and indebtedness (Pellegrini et al., 2010) and pride. This perspective sheds a different light on lacklustre CSR outcomes and

ethical transgressions of large corporations (Banerjee, 2008a; Vogel, 2006), by suggesting how identity work by CSR practitioners can compromise moral agency, as so vividly illustrated in the tobacco dispute.

This interpretation of CSR as a resource for identity regulation serving established power arrangements and the status quo is not a new discovery and I make no claim to originality, the topic having been explored by several scholars (see for instance Gond and Nyberg, 2017). Also, Costas and Kärreman (2013) for example, in their empirical study of two large management consultancy firms found that *"CSR discourses and practices serve to construct an idealized image of a socially, ecologically and ethically responsible corporate self. In this way, CSR works as a form of aspirational control that ties employees' aspirational identities and ethical conscience to the organization"* (2013:394). Unlike my study, Costas and Kärreman focused on a broad sample pool of managers (rather than managers with formal responsibilities for CSR) and the relationship between non-work and work self when engaging in CSR activities designed for them. Costas and Kärreman's study, also a discourse analysis, argued that CSR was a form of socio-ideological and aspirational control. In my study, this perspective can be seen in how CSR practitioners constructed themselves as 'really living out' a preferred version of the organization and being a 'force for good' as explored in chapter 5. Socio-politically many statements made by interviewees contained constructions of the self as a better employee, via the object of CSR, in ways that might help them stand out in a crowded workplace. More broadly, they often constructed the organization in ways that sanctioned and ennobled a certain type of political ideology regarding the role of businesses. Following this interpretation, CSR in the case study context offers an empirical view of CSR not as a societal project, but more as an internal cultural project along the lines proposed by Willmott:

> *The guiding aim and abiding concern of corporate culturism, as I shall characterize it, is to win the 'hearts and minds' of employees: to define their purposes by managing what they think and feel, and not just how they behave. The strengthening of corporate cultures, it is claimed, provides the key to securing 'unusual effort on the part of apparently ordinary employees' (Peters and Waterman, 1982, p. xvii).* (1993:516)

Gabriel (2008) notes the increasing tendency of top managers in organizations to be *"preoccupied with the orchestration of collective fantasies and the venting of collective emotions"* (2008:311). Framing CSR within existing understandings of business strategy, rejuvenating organizational identity and purpose, is what Peters and Waterman described as

creating *"a broad, uplifting, shared culture, a coherent framework within which charged-up people search for appropriate adaptations. Their ability to extract extraordinary contributions from very large numbers of people turns on the ability to create a highly valued sense of purpose"* (1982:51). In this way, CSR at Walgreens might be interpreted as a form of labour control similar to the critiques made of the movement for TQM. For instance, Kerfoot and Knights (1995) argued that TQM treated internal colleagues as customers and was not openly resisted by employees or unions on account of the clear focus it provided and how it helped individuals differentiate themselves.

The important point to draw from this discussion is how CSR talk in the case study context can be interpreted as offering varied opportunities for identity work that 'lock' individuals into existing organizational understandings and practices, so as the localised understanding of CSR was much less about business responsibility and more about maintaining and improving managerial performance, and followership of strategy know-how and understandings. This 'locking' was most visible in the unchallenging and service styled role identities CSR practitioners constructed of themselves, and the normalization of unsatisfactory CSR outcomes. As Costas and Kärreman also remarked in their study:

> *It is striking how the very existence of CSR, its ideals and sometimes even the mechanisms by which it is enforced remain unquestioned in our cases. This seems indicative of ethical sealing. Ethical sealing occurs when a particular set of moral judgements and issues is selected and maintained as the set, singling out a limited number of demarcated themes as objects of ethical consideration.* (2013:409)

8.2.4 Summary and Implications

This discussion has highlighted how CSR may offer a discursive space in organizations for individuals to address antagonistic discourses, making space (however temporary, large or small) for spiritual, nostalgic, idealist or uncertain voices. The study underscores Christensen et al.'s (2013) argument that CSR talk should not be taken literally, and that CSR communications (whether internal or external) *"are idealized stories of hopes, dreams and visions through which corporate actors hope to seduce themselves and each other"* (2013:380). However, whereas Christensen et al. (2013) emphasized the emancipatory prospects such talk may embody, my study emphasizes the 'holding' effects of such discourse. Whether it seduces or locks

individuals into received and often ideological meanings (as argued by Gond and Nyberg, 2017), or specific identity orientations, the research findings have shown how CSR talk can be just one of many discourses from which CSR practitioners may draw to *"forge their lives in the midst of ambivalences and contradictions"* (Kondo, 1990:302). Taking this approach, contradictions between CSR practices and communications (Christensen et al., 2013), or walk and talk as described by Schoeneborn (2019), can be understood as reflections of fragmented and precarious identity work constituting CSR practitioners and their CSR practices.

By casting a spot light on the role of identity work in constituting CSR practices and CSR practitioners at Walgreens, the case study suggests a distinction may be drawn between organizations in which identity work intensifies on account of antagonistic discourses arising from organizational size, sector, business model, egregious events or leadership style, and organizations in which individuals are less concerned with constituting themselves against such antagonisms. This identities perspective also raises questions about the impact of identity work by CSR practitioners on organizing processes associated with CSR practices and varying forms of moral agency, suggesting how competing or fragmented identities act as a constraint on the enactment of individual moral agency. In this paradigm, a continuum might be proposed based on an accumulation of antagonistic discourses verses less antagonistic discourses, positing that CSR constructed in discursively extreme antagonistic contexts constrains moral agency and the construction of CSR practices. In terms of further questions, equally interesting is whether more controlled and controlling versions of CSR, in which CSR practitioners and other internal stakeholders are key consumers, leads to CSR practices being constituted more as a resource of comfort, rather than CSR practices being constituted as a resource for agentive moral action.

8.3 A Practice Reading

> *An act consists in causing things to happen or to be. But in order for things to be they have to be realized. In order for them to be realized the conditions for realization must be met, that is to say, one has to be able to do, or know how to do, and so do.*
> (Greimas, 1989:542)

8.3.1 Introduction

This section (8.3) develops an interpretation of the case study findings from the perspective of strategy as practice and practice theory. So far, I have stressed in this thesis the significance of the research opportunity in terms of situating CSR strategizing within context. However, as Nicolini (2012) and Seidl and Whittington (2014) warn, *"reliance on atheoretical notions of context can be a form of 'lazy' social science"* (2014:1408), and so it is incumbent on the practice and discourse researcher to explain how local happenings and enactment link to flat ontologies across networks and connections, or to wider structures and systems and social phenomena (Mumby, 2011; Seidl and Whittington, 2014). Following this commitment, this section explores the research findings specifically in relation to the localised interaction between strategy and CSR discourses, and the particular insights these offer for the constitution of CSR practices and CSR practitioners, and implications for the enactment and outcomes of CSR more broadly, as a social practice within organizations.

The main focus of the section is to first (in sub-section 8.3.2) discuss how CSR practice (as praxis) was discursively constructed from existing understandings and know-how regulated by localised understandings of strategy. Here I discuss how understandings of strategy as commensurate with 'good' and 'doing the right thing' inhibited the appropriation of CSR. Second, sub-section 8.3.3 discusses how day-to-day CSR practices were constituted from *"doings and sayings"* (Schatzki, 1996:89) associated with performing strategy practices, and how CSR practitioners observed strategy understandings, rules and know-how, suggesting that the extent to which strategy talk symbolized work itself amongst middle managers constrained the enactment of CSR practices. Thirdly, sub-section 8.3.4 discusses how CSR practitioners' agency was constituted in relation to how they positioned themselves as followers of localised strategy practices. Finally (in sub-section 8.3.5), I discuss the implications of these findings and how the empirics suggest establishing moral agency (Weaver 2006) or internal critical practices (Sonenshein, 2005) based on aspirational identity work, may be constrained by the way strategy practices are socially performed in firms. The discussion highlights the epistemological advantage of a constitutive approach that situates CSR practitioners ontologically within a community as carriers of practice, and in the context of competing discourses.

8.3.2 CSR Practice

The aim of this sub-section is to discuss CSR practice as praxis (as discussed in sub-section 2.3.3). The case study findings have shown how CSR was discursively confined to local understandings and know-how of what constituted *good* action, in particular within familiar understandings of strategy practice and its promise of success. In other words, CSR was constituted in terms of how CSR could enable *good* action in accordance with strategy practices at the firm, and less so in terms of how CSR might be a practice in its own right with new or different understandings of *good* action. Following Tsoukas's (2018) logic that strategy praxis can be understood as a normative praxis by nature of the moral content and phronesis involved in strategy judgements and action (chapter 2, sub-section 2.3.3), a strategy praxis implicitly constructed as *good* and *right* may be considered as already constituting, at least in part, a responsible practice. It follows that in such a context incentives to appropriate new meanings of *good* as regards firm responsibility would be subdued. In other words, if I already regard my (strategy) praxis as *good* why would I adopt a new praxis? For these individuals CSR was not constructed in terms of how Walgreens might change its understanding of its social responsibilities, rather CSR was constructed to help show how *good* the firm was (see sub-section 5.4).

Such a context where moral purpose is already subjectively constituted as implicitly embodied within existing strategy praxis may then contribute to the appropriation of CSR not as a moral praxis, but as a discursive resource to support a perceived existing and inherently moral strategy praxis. In other words, just as Knights and Morgan (1991) found that strategy discourse held certain 'truth' effects for managers, we might also say it holds certain 'moral' effects. This is an important discussion because as Hall reminds us discourse *"governs the way that a topic can be meaningfully talked about and reasoned about. It also influences how ideas are put into practice and used to regulate the conduct of others"* (2001:72). Therefore, whereas academic literature often assumes *better* outcomes in CSR will progressively emerge as managers accept and reconcile the tensions between strategy and social issues (Hengst et al., 2019), my case study findings suggest that CSR practice can be constrained (even stunted) by strategy praxis that discursively controls and constitutes local meanings of *good* and responsible action as implicit and taken-for-granted.

According to Seidl's (2007) argument that *"one has to treat the strategy concepts in different contexts as different concepts"* (2007:199) (see sub-section 2.3.2), it follows that CSR constituted in different strategy contexts (sometimes referred to as fields such as marketing, operations, finance) would be understood as different concepts. This was suggested, for example, in one interviewee's statement comparing CSR to quality control in the operations field (see also sub-section 6.2.1). Following this interpretation, CSR practice was discursively constructed in fragments in each of the different strategy contexts, that at the same time also observed the status quo understandings of each of those fields. In other words, we might say that at Walgreens CSR practice was constituted from and overwhelmed (which could easily be mistaken for acceptance) by strategy praxis that already constituted understandings and know-how of *good* action in multiple areas of strategy praxis. This was suggested by the way many research participants discursively constituted and justified controversial tobacco sales as reasonable and intelligible within multiple local understandings of *good* strategy. In such a context, attempting to modify the meaning of existing strategy praxis would be the equivalent of interpreting strategy antagonistically, which as the findings illustrated, was unlikely in the context setting. One interpretation of these findings is then that the more strategy praxis is understood locally as constituting *good* action, the less likelihood exists for constituting new or different CSR understandings, at least in a way that sustains practice. Drawing from the case study, this interpretation suggests that how strategy praxis is understood, accepted and performed in context plays a pivotal role in shaping how CSR practice is appropriated and enacted in firms, either as an affirmational resource of existing moral fortitude, or, as a resource offering opportunities to constitute new moral meanings.

8.3.3 CSR Practices

The aim of this sub-section is to discuss CSR practices (as discussed in sub-section 2.3.4). As discussed in chapter 2, *"practices contain evaluative distinctions concerning what is good or acceptable"* (Tsoukas, 2018:324). However, philosophers have pointed out that the social embeddedness of practices (and the internal and external rewards derived from performing practices) can lead to practices being associated with both virtues and vices as practitioners enact practices in ways that develop expertise and identity, or, develop self-interest, routinization, and the prioritizing of technical adherence to performing practices over value orientated judgements (MacIntyre, 1985; Tsoukas, 2018). The findings from the case study support this perspective offering an empirical example, if only momentary, of how CSR practices were constrained by the routinized discursive performance of strategy practices that followed and reproduced, almost without challenge, localised understandings and rules

concerning accepted *good* strategy practices. As several interviewee statements suggested, practitioners engage in performing such practices on an understanding that they are doing the right thing, as exemplified in the localised context where adherence to, and habituation of, strategy rules were at times eulogized as a symbol of work itself. In this sense, the case study findings shed light on a nascent debate about how actors construct and maintain inconsistencies in CSR practices (Anesa et al., 2019) through the recursive performance of strategy practices across different foci or fields for instance, finance operations and marketing. The findings also suggest how adherence to and in-transferability of practices within fields (Seidl, 2007), that is what makes sense to perform within the context of local strategy practices, suppresses the constitution and enactment of CSR practices, as was suggested in various examples explored in section 6.2.1, such as the account of recycling prescription scripts.

These theoretical and empirical insights suggest that CSR practices may be significantly, rather than marginally, constituted from the localised discursive performance of multiple strategy practices within different fields across the organization. In larger complex organizations where the plethora of differently performed situated strategy practices has the potential to be extensive, the scope for inconsistent and contradictory CSR would appear to multiply. This perspective has some bearing on the findings of J. Ewing whose 2017 book *Faster, Higher, Farther: The inside Story of the Volkswagen Scandal*, recounted how the excessive observation and following of understandings about competitive advantage and impossible sales targets led to unlawful practices. This case was all the more shocking on account of Volkswagen's highly regarded reputation at the time in CSR matters. The focus on the way strategy practices are socially performed and how this influences the stabilizing and sustaining of CSR practices expands our understanding of the relationship between CSR and strategy. In this respect and building on the discussion about praxis (section 8.3.2), it's possible to theorise that CSR practices may only stabilize as new practices in contexts where CSR is understood and constituted as complementary, unique or different to strategy practices, and in contexts where the performance of strategy practices does not demand strict observation of strategy practices or the containment of CSR understandings within existing strategy understandings. This theorising challenges popular ideas about 'shared value' (Porter and Kramer, 2006 and 2011), that have advocated practising CSR within existing strategy paradigms.

8.3.4 CSR Practitioners

The aim of this sub-section is to discuss CSR practitioners (from the perspective discussed in sub-sections 2.3.5 and 2.3.6). Thus far a constitutive approach has shed insight on how CSR practice (sub-section 8.3.2) and CSR practices (sub-section 8.3.3) were constituted as concordant with familiar strategy discourses and its performance. Recalling how practitioners and practices are entangled, I turn in this sub-section to CSR practitioners as middle managers and carriers of context-based practices to discuss how practitioner identities were entangled and constituted as *"the effect of the interaction between human agency and organizational discourses rather than in the determination of one to the other"* (Bergström and Knights, 2006:351).

While it may be the case that in some contexts CSR practitioners may constitute themselves more as organizational outsiders (as discussed in sub-section 2.2.8), this was not the finding from my case study. Rather, as Paroutis and Heracleous (2013) showed, practitioners in my study discursively positioned themselves according to established strategy practices, and confined their agency within established social practices associated with performing strategy practices. Laine and Vaara (2007) and Knights and Morgan (1991) have suggested that all groups have needs for rationalization, identity, security and order and might conceptualize and activate their agency by discursively positioning themselves in relation to locally entrenched strategy practices. In the case study context, even when faced with an existential crisis to their moral identities such as being associated with continued tobacco sales, many middle managers with formal CSR responsibilities still observed and discursively performed understandings within local strategy discourses to justify the status quo. As well as affirming (willing or unwillingly) existing power arrangements and understandings, in so doing they constituted the self (if only momentarily) as defenders, not challengers of the status quo, and constituted accountability for the inconsistency as lying with society, customers, the rules of the market, etc. In other words, blame was discursively positioned outside the company (Whittle and Mueller, 2016), as far from the self as possible. According to this logic, CSR practitioners constituting the moral self from internal discourses and as insiders, we might theorise will be less inclined to challenge internal practice because of implications for moral self-identity.

An assumption underlining some discussions in organization studies and CSR literatures is one that articulates CSR practitioners as agentive individuals in pursuit of progressive improvement in the business environment (an assumption challenged by the findings of Carollo and Guerci's

2017 study). It may be that as scholars we have inadvertently created this intention. However, considering that many CSR practitioners are in-house employees with managerial roles (which was the case in the context for my case study) they are likely, as discussed in chapter 2 (sub-section 2.3.6), to be constituted from many different role expectations. Drawing from Harding et al.'s (2014) perspective of middle managers to interpret the findings of the case study, we can see how in the Walgreens' context CSR practitioners often constituted self, through the object of CSR, as conformist agents to the main business strategy. Following this interpretation, the research findings showed that a key aspect of being conformist was helping others conform so that they too might receive internal rewards assumed to be associated with performing strategy practices (MacIntyre, 1985). In this respect, research participants described how they helped other managers (through CSR) differentiate themselves in the competitive employee environment, how they helped raise the status of individuals by offering visibility with executive management and how they offered others the opportunity to feel good about their corporate identity (sub-sections 6.2.2 and 6.2.4). In a context in which CSR practitioners constitute self and constitute others as conformist to strategy practices and as insiders, one has to ask, pragmatically, where the motivation to disrupt or challenge those social practices would originate. This would seem to be all the more aggravated in a context in which unwanted identities (non-strategist identities) are stigmatized running the social risk of loss of internal rewards such as status (recognition) and participation (visibility). In such a context, an individual's agency may easily be confined to received scripts and expectations, thereby adding further to the becoming and social embeddedness of strategy practitioners and practices, but less so to the becoming of CSR practitioners and practices. This is not to suggest that these individuals were just conformist. Rather, the point is that other identities, that they may have desired became mute(d).

8.3.5 Summary and Implications

Clarke et al. asserted that *"managers' identity work constitutes a continuing quest to (re)-author their selves as moral beings subject to organizationally based disciplinary practices" (2009:324)*. In this section I have discussed how these 'disciplinary practices' were contained in the research context within the diligent performance (willing or unwilling) of strategy practices. In this context everyone was a would be, can be, must be, ought to be, have to be, am, want to be, may be, will be, obliged to be, even reluctant strategist, as this was the language via which individuals could participate in and create a work life setting. In this world, new CSR voices had to be concealed, hidden, transposed, morphed and disguised. This observation from my findings lends support to the argument that in some cases moral practices do not reside within

'stronger' or 'better' CSR practices, but within the performance of strategy practices. Accordingly, a firm's proclivity to act in contradictory ways, or irresponsibly, may not be in their CSR practices, but in the way strategy practices are performed. From this perspective contradictory and inconsistent CSR, would not be related so much to CSR practices, but to contradictory strategy practices. Moral agency would therefore be connected to challenging the wisdom of taken-for-granted strategy practices. In considering Greimas (2009) statement at the start of this section and Sonenshein's (2005) theory of internal social critical, we may say then that in order to be able to do (act as a moral agent) one must know what to challenge.

The findings from my case study echo those of Carollo and Guerci (2017) who questioned whether CSR practitioners are best placed for the task of improving corporate responsibility in large corporations. In their study of 26 CSR managers working in national and multinational companies in Italy they found that even when CSR managers cast themselves as progressive agents and *'patient believers'*, "*it seems that they are more likely to foster continuity in current business practices, instead of challenging common assumptions"* (2017:643). Carrington et al. (2018) in their study of 26 CSR managers in a range of corporations in the U.K., Australia and the U.S. also found that many CSR managers when faced with morally challenging inconsistencies between individual values and organizational practice externalized responsibility, *"rhetorically rendering themselves incapable of enacting anything other than reproductive practices"* (2018). Carrington et al. described such positioning as a coping strategy and coined individuals taking this approach 'conscious abdicators'.

As discussed in chapter 2, other empirical studies have also found that from an identity perspective, individuals often engage in discursive strategies of 'distancing' and 'deflecting' responsibility onto outsiders (Allen et al., 2015), when faced with issues that might threaten their moral identity. Taken accumulatively, these empirical studies suggest that CSR practitioners in large companies may have a tendency to deflect, rather than challenge issues that may threaten moral self-identity. This suggests that it may be much harder to engender internal social criticism on ethical and moral issues amongst practitioners than behaviouralist approaches have sometimes hypothesized (Sonenshein, 2005). What these empirical studies also suggest (see also Wright et al., 2012), is that CSR practitioners in large corporations deploy a range of identities and impression management (Goffman, 1959), which enable them to cope with moral contradictions and inconsistencies, while also protecting their status as a valuable employee (Brown and Coupland, 2005) by contributing to maintaining a harmonious workplace (Hochschild, 1983). My study adds to these conversations by suggesting that it is the way situated strategy practices are performed in these organizations that influences whether CSR

practitioners are merely reproducing the status quo, or able to work beyond existing practices toward stabilizing new (moral) practices. The study's findings also challenge assumptions that CSR's proximity to strategy implies progressive improvement.

8.4 A Discourse Reading

8.4.1 Introduction

Christensen et al. (2013) concluded that academic searching for the gaps between what companies say they *do* and what they actually *do* was a fruitless and pointless quest because from a constitutive perspective CSR discourse is aspirational and humans cannot fulfil all their aspirations. Building further on the constitutive approach and in keeping with my commitment to avoid micro-isolationism and link my analysis to broader social phenomena (Balogun et al., 2014; Mumby, 2011; Seidl and Whittington, 2014), this section discusses the findings of the case study in the context of CSR as a discursive process constituting, legitimizing and stabilizing uncertainty in a fragmented, disputed and instable environment.

The overall aim of this section (8.4) is to first explore a) How individual constructions that are often contradictory in isolation helped constitute loose, but shared forms of narrative legitimacy and compromise making, and second to explore, b). How these smaller distributed discourses linked to larger discourses in a nexus of economic, political and social structures. To do this, I draw from two distinct, but epistemologically compatible, theories that focus on grammar and language to highlight how individuals maintain and justify organizations that matter to them. The first sub-section (8.4.2) discusses the case study findings in the context of legitimation processes (Suddaby et al., 2017), in particular narrative legitimacy (Greimas 1987; Golant and Sillince 2007) via which organizational members engage in legitimacy making and maintenance by protagonizing, narrativizing and moralizing the organization and its leaders. Through the lens of Boltanski and Thévenot's (2006 [1991]) sociology of critical capacity, the second sub-section (8.4.3) discusses the case study findings as compromise making. For reasons of limitations of this thesis, I focus the discussion in sub-section 8.4.3 solely on the accommodations, compromises and simulacrum constructed during the tobacco dispute (as discussed in chapter 7). Sub-section 8.44 discusses the implications of the readings in this section.

8.4.2 CSR as Narrative Legitimation

Narratological interests usually emerge from research using narrative specific approaches to research management and organization theory by looking at stories, myths, sagas and other forms of narrative as forms of data. However, one interesting aspect of my case study findings was how some research participants constructed the organization and key stakeholders, via the object of CSR, according to narrative structures. Hence, an interpretation I explore in this sub-section is how CSR practitioners participating in this study discursively protagonized, narrativized and moralized the organization and its agents, attributing it with a shared form of moral and social legitimacy, including moral competence and moral status. This is interesting since as discussed in chapter 2 we know relatively little about what CSR practitioners' CSR talk *actually* does in organizations, from the perspective of Austin (1962) and Searle (2008). Whereas sub-section 8.2.3 focused on how CSR practitioners created a shared reality reflective of their (identity) desires, the focus of this sub-section is how research participants' narrative constructions of the organization as a competent and moral agent recursively constituted a shared form of social validation and legitimation of the organization and its leaders. In this way I explore how the case study findings draw attention to the idea of CSR as narrative, and how we might see outward manifestations of CSR discourse from organizations as ambitious, sometimes romanticised constructions based on internal social legitimation processes.

Chapter 5 outlined how CSR practitioners invoked CSR talk to protagonize the organization and construct heterogeneous, but virtuous representations of the organization's purpose and the purpose of profit focused corporations more widely. Drawing from Greimas (1987), Golant and Sillince explained how the "*attributions of agency intrinsic to narrative are realized grammatically through modal constructions that correspond with principal modal verbs: devoir (obligation), vouloir (desire), pouvoir (competence) and savoir (know-how)"* (2007:1152), and how *"the organization emerges as an independent social actor, i.e. it is actively 'narrativized', through the plausible attribution of collective action with this set of modalities, or attitudes"* (Ibid). In the case study context, such narrativization of the organization was captured in the 'force for good' discourse (see sub-section 5.2.1). In this moment the organization, its key agents and its members were set in a narrative frame of a protagonist in pursuit of a quest (Cooren, 2001). An interpretive Greimasian implication of this statement would be that there was a quest that needed attention (*'secure a better world'*), that the speakers and those who followed them were worthy protagonists to lead the quest (*'a powerful force for good'*), that the world around them was in jeopardy (*'future generations'*) without their intervention, and that they were competent to achieve the quest. In this way the organization could be associated with

a need and desire to act in a social context, as opposed to just being an economic unit. According to this interpretation, two transformations can be observed in this moment, what Greimas terms the manipulation phase (1987). First, agency was passed from the leaders to the collective, the organization. Second, the organization, its leaders and members, were constituted and legitimized not as an economic unit in service of shareholders, but as a social unit creating a better world. This construction was repeated throughout the data in a number of forms, such as working for a 'greater' good or a 'higher' mission, 'up here'. The significance of this transformation, or manipulation in Greimasian terms, cannot be understated in a world where corporations more than ever face legal and financial pressures to focus on economic benefits for generating shareholder value (Sundaram and Inkpen, 2004), and in a sector where profit margins are continually under pressure.

According to Greimas (1987), the manipulation phase is followed by the competence phase in which *"in order to complete the mission established in the manipulation phase, the protagonist must acquire the competence necessary for its fulfilment (usually involving the recruitment of allies and supporters and the overcoming of obstacles and opponents)*" (in Golant and Sillince, 2007:1153). In this respect the case study findings showed how research participants constructed partnerships with United Nations agencies and other famous individuals in ways that constituted the organization's competence to recruit high level moral allies. Similarly, the findings showed how research participants constructed problems in ways that objectified the organization's competence to overcome them, as was the case in the tobacco dispute when some constructed assurances that the problem would be dealt with 'in the fullness of time'. Suddaby et al. (2017) emphasized that legitimacy emerges from common understanding as opposed to a means-end evaluation. These constructions show how many interviewees in different ways constructed a loosely distributed, but shared, understanding of the organization's competence that was in a constant state of becoming.

Golant and Sillince (2007) stress that discourse fragments must be consistent with a narrative archetype in order to gather coherence. In this light, data from the case study contained story fragments that can be interpreted as progressively facilitating the construction of an organizational narrative of a romantic archetype. Just as Gabriel and Hirschhorn (1999) maintain that labels attached to leaders rather than being determined by leadership attributes, are more likely the "*product of follower phantasies"* (1999:155). Fragments of a romantic archetype were noticeable in the data in the way some research participants constructed leaders as possessing a sort of moral heroism (see sub-section 5.2.3). Such constructions are a long way from discourses of CEO narcissism present elsewhere in academic and societal discourses (see

for example Oesterle et al., 2016; Rhodes and Bloom, 2018). The narrative attractiveness of CSR discourse as a resource for constructing and maintaining moral legitimacy was also highlighted by the repeated invocation by research participants of three key CSR stories (see section 5.4). These stories captured elements of romantic fantasies as CSR practitioners constructed a company worthy of adoration by themselves and others. The data also showed how events associated with CSR were particularly important for constructing a reality of social legitimacy, in which the organization was not a pool of anxious individuals struggling against each other for success and promotions, but a foci point for social cohesion. In these statements CSR practitioners constructed an organizational narrative, via the object of CSR, which was not just about a preferred reality (as discussed in sub-section 8.2.4) but dedicated to creating narrative frames of the organization in pursuit of a social and moral quest, as validated via events, CSR reports (sub-section 5.4.2) and the reproduction of stories in the public arena (sub-section 5.4.1).

Christensen et al. (2013) acknowledge the seductive, futuristic and hope giving qualities of what they term CSR talk. However, whereas they argued this can be a pivot point for engendering improvements in corporate responsibility (because speech is consequential), it is also possible to theorise based on findings from my case study and our knowledge of narrative in organizations (Vaara et al., 2016), that once moral and social legitimacy are (perceptually) achieved such narratives may be less progressively orientated, and more stability enhancing. Christensen et al. (2013), also point out that 'aspirational talk' can only be effective if audiences are convinced official discourse is a serious endeavour. The findings from the case study in this regard show how narrative CSR talk may appeal to individuals with 'service' and 'idealistic' orientations, who self-select into CSR communities in organizations, but may easily be met with more scepticism from other voices in organizations. In this view, CSR talk is just one of many narratives within the plurivocal organization, but it is the CSR narrative, not the sceptic's narrative, that is outwardly diffused.

8.4.3 CSR as Compromise

From a discourse perspective CSR has been studied as argument (Coupland, 2005), as rhetoric (O'Connor and Ihlen, 2018) and as paradox (Hoffmann, 2018). These approaches highlight the contestable nature of CSR discourse, but for the most part concentrate on public manifestations of CSR discourse. In this sub-section, I discuss how the findings from the case study draw attention to the idea of CSR as compromise, and how in this light we might see external

manifestations of CSR discourse as defensive constructions of multiple fragile or false internal compromises and accommodations. To do this, I discuss the case study findings through the lens of Boltanski and Thévenot's (2006 [1991]) sociology of critical capacity, and specifically their theory that six discursive 'orders of worth'[43] (civic, market, domestic, industrial, fame, inspired) construct the worlds around which individuals evaluate, justify and reach agreement on issues that matter to them. For reasons of practicality, I focus this discussion on the findings presented in chapter 7 regarding how CSR practitioners constructed responses to the issue of continued tobacco sales by Walgreens. In focusing on this dispute, my intention is to facilitate unpacking of the nexus of economic, political and social structures as they interact in the normalization of tobacco sales as a 'thing'.

In line with the aims of my study, the story I explore as regards 'the dispute' is not that of a leading pharma-retail firm continuing to sell tobacco in a healthcare setting in spite of numerous commitments to combatting cancer. Rather, it is the story of how middle managers with formal CSR responsibilities enacted the firm's official tobacco discourse, legitimizing it and constructing it, in some instances, as equal to *good*, or reasonable. As such, interviewees partook in reproducing a meta-conversation (Robichaud, 2004) protective of the status quo, and its economic, political and social structures. This situation is surprising because based on their initial responses, and, scholarship that points to the vibrancy of 'thick' moral communities with critical competence (Boltanski et al., 1984) and coherent understandings of social rights and wrongs (Sonenshein, 2005) in organizations, we might have expected a community of CSR practitioners to have sustained a clearer, more distinctive discourse of criticism and discord toward an ethically anti-social topic.

Drawing from Foucault (1977) we might assume that harsh discursive disciplining forces encouraged collective compliance with the official discourse. But this seems insufficient, and has the disadvantage of disagentivizing individuals (Mumby, 2011). Academically, exploring how CSR practitioners reconstituted a morally controversial topic as reasonable, *good* and even responsible is intriguing because the findings suggest CSR practitioners constructed both *good* and *bad* versions of the firm simultaneously, whilst also maintaining coherence with their realities. Additionally, while executive managers were responsible for the official firm discourse regarding continued tobacco sales, CSR practitioners enacted and practised the official discourse, bestowing it with legitimacy, making it a living reality, constructing in their *"doings and sayings"* (Schatzki, 1996:89) the marginalization of ethical considerations. Empirically

[43] Gond et al. (2015) provide a useful summary of these orders of worth reproduced in appendix 10.12. The authors' version adds two additional worlds 'green' and 'project'.

these findings further challenge theoretical arguments that social criticism via positive identity association progressively drives organizational members *"toward unearthing thick moral principles and any contradictions between those principles and practices"* (Sonenshein, 2005:476). Or that individuals seek moral action based on identity ambitions because *"…being a moral agent in terms of having a moral identity, i.e. having one's self-concept centrally oriented toward a collection of moral traits that both define who one is and yield tendencies toward paradigmatically moral action"* (Weaver, 2006:345).

Boltanski and Thévenot (2006 [1991]) argue that social relations are explained through actor's practices and competences to *"evaluate the worth of things and beings across multiple social spheres, establish equivalences between them and, in so doing, forge agreements that enable collective action"* (Gond et al., 2015). According to Boltanski and Thévenot's theory, individuals *"are obligated by the situation in which they are involved to shift from one mode of adjustment to another, from one measure of worth to another"* and, *"this plasticity constitutes a defining feature of normalcy"* (2006:16). Boltanski and Thévenot's (2006 [1991]) point of departure is that peoples possess critical competency that defines them as moral agents, as emphasized in the context of my case study (see sub-section 7.3.1). Individuals according to this view are not passive recipients but active agents evaluating, justifying and accepting certain agreements. A key aspect of this theory is the way individuals *"confront uncertainty by making use of objects to establish orders and, conversely, how they consolidate objects by attaching them to orders constructed"* (2006:17).

Following Boltanski and Thévenot (2006 [1991]) theory and starting with the civic order of worth concerned with collective welfare, the findings from the case study highlight how interviewees constituted smoking cessation products as a material object symbolic of the organization's identity associated with helping others (rather than just selling them things). Instead of helping society at large by disassociating from the harmful effects of tobacco, the construction of smoking cessation products as helpful enabled CSR practitioners to constitute the company and its leaders as *good* on account of an (unspecified) number of customers helped via smoking cessation products and programmes. In this moment, the firm was reproduced as not helping everyone, but as being in solidarity with its customers, empathetic and supportive, as nurturing a 'beautiful' reality, accompanying and coaching its customers on one-to-one terms (see sub-section 7.3.2). In this sense, and from the interviewee's perspective, the analysis highlighted how smoking cessation programmes and products were constructed as a reasonable equivalent to ending tobacco sales by meeting Boltanski and Thévenot's (2006 [1991]) test of equality and solidarity and simulating a concern for collective welfare (see Gond et al.,

2015:205). According to Boltanski and Thévenot's theory, a true test of collective welfare possesses the quality of 'purity' and the potential to resolve (literally purify) a controversy (2006:137). In the case of tobacco sales, smoking cessation products and programmes appeared to offer such purity by providing the opportunity to construct certainty and reassurance that the firm was helping cure individuals of an addiction.

Boltanski and Thévenot's (2006 [1991]) theory asserts that individuals, to be valid and be heard, have to base their statements in a limited number of orders of worth or 'worlds' considered legitimate by others. As well as the *civic world*, the analysis from the case study highlights the strength of the discourse of the *market world*. The findings show how some CSR practitioners often constructed their responses from understandings and knowledge of business pricing, cost and profits in ways that conserved the rules of free market goods and services (see sub-section 7.3.3). In the *market world* (and following the explanation of the worlds as set out by Gond et al. (2015) and reproduced in appendix 10.12), the test of validity is market competitiveness. In the case study context, CSR practitioners can be seen constructing responses that constituted competitiveness via indicators of store footfall and ensuring customers visit Walgreens' stores, as opposed to competitor stores. Equally, proof of the test having been met was constructed around (maintaining) continued profitability. Constructions associated with the *market world* (the economic structure), featured in responses of many interviewees. Drawing on the discourses of customer footfall and profitability, interviewees constituted themselves and the organization as acting appropriately within established economic rules, understandings and know-how. According to these understandings and their enactment and normalization in the workplace setting and the context for this case study, research participants' responses were coherent to them. The fact that other large U.S. retail companies such as Target and CVS, whom we can assume follow equivalent market principles, have abolished tobacco sales, underlines how such a compromise was a locally constructed phenomenon.

Boltanski and Thévenot's (2006 [1991]) theory accommodates interpersonal relationships and tradition via what they term the *domestic world*. In the *domestic world* relationships are assessed through esteem and reputations and tested through trustworthiness. In this respect, we can interpret some interviewees' constructions of selling tobacco as part of the firm's tradition, or on account of customer demand, as constituting the firm's trustworthiness over time, as a sort of reliable friend would do. Similarly, some interviewee responses constructed potential calamity in the event of ending tobacco sales, constituting a sense of betrayal or disloyalty to the cause (the political structure) by depicting impending catastrophe brought about by irrational recklessness, not commensurate with reputable trustworthy behaviour. These constructions

created impressions of the 'house' collapsing without tobacco sales, a notion challenged by one or two interviewees, but reproduced by many (see sub-section 7.3.4).

Another aspect of the *domestic world* encapsulated by Boltanski and Thévenot's (2006[1991]) theory is hierarchy and superiority which are constituted through worthiness of persons. In this world persons constitute their superiority through reserved cordiality to visitors and through being informed, wise, benevolent and helpful to others who may be constituted as lesser (Boltanski and Thévenot, 2006:165-166). In interpreting the case study findings from this perspective, we see how customers (smokers) were at times constructed as 'other', who it was not correct to police or judge, but who had succumbed to 'bad' things (tobacco). However, in the moment the customer 'trusted' in the advice and mentoring of a pharmacist, i.e. a superior of the firm, the relationship was constructed differently, as more harmonious and 'beautiful'. Boltanski and Thévenot's make the point that tests of validity in the *domestic world* occur in social situations such as celebrations, birthdays, anniversaries, baptisms, childbirth, weddings etc., which mark *"a new distribution of states of worth, for the distribution is often modified by an event that has something to do with generation or other major milestones: birth, marriage, death"* (2006:175).

Accordingly, *domestic world* situations offer an opportunity to bring together through conversation, worthier and less worthy persons whose relations of worth can thus be confirmed, via coaching and mentoring as suggested in some interviewee statements (see sub-section 7.3.2). From the perspective of the case study findings, Boltanski and Thévenot's observation surfaces the intimacy of the moment when a person (customer) faces their immortality via the harm to their health caused by tobacco, a moment in which they place their trust (a test of domestic worth) in a pharmacist to assist them. Clearly, if a healthcare provider were perceived as encouraging tobacco consumption Boltanski and Thévenot's test of trustworthiness would not be met and vital constructions associated with benevolence, wisdom, respectability and goodness could not be maintained, worse still they could be shattered. In this light, we can interpret research participants' discourses denying and displacing agency and responsibility for the tobacco controversy as accommodations to uphold and protect the test of validity in the *domestic world*. Hence, constructions that denied or displaced firm agency in the tobacco controversy can therefore, in the case study context, be interpreted as crucial to maintaining validity of trustworthiness (see sub-section 7.3.3).

Finally constructions associated with a fourth world, the *industrial world*, were less prominent in the case study findings, than the three worlds discussed so far in this sub-section (constructions linked to the *world of fame* and the *inspirational world* were also less evident, though not absent). One interpretation I offer for this is the fragility of the compromise between CSR practitioners and executive managers at Walgreens over 'the dispute', and I suggest an absence of constructions relating to the *industrial world* is suggestive that the relevant test of validity in the *industrial world*, described by Gond et al. as competence, reliability and planning (2015:205), was not met. Interviewee statements detailed (in Table 9) in sub-section 7.3.4 containing constructions of time constitute competence in the future ('in the fullness of time'), showing how interviewees avoided constructions constituting the organization and its leaders as competent on this matter in the now.

Interpreting the findings theoretically through the perspective offered by Boltanski and Thévenot's theory of worlds of worth (2006 [1991]), sheds a sociological eye on the instability and the fragility of the constructions research participants developed to justify continued tobacco sales by Walgreens. This fragility was underscored by the analysis in sub-section 7.3.1 illustrating how for many research participants performing the discursive moves related to each of these worlds entailed being in 'conflict', 'a difficult space' and 'uncomfortable'.

8.4.4 Summary and Implications

Justifications for actions are political acts, intended to convince listeners of the agent's inherent 'correctness' and 'goodness'. Discussing the data findings of this case study through the lens of Boltanski and Thévenot's (2006[1991]) theory of worlds of worth (somewhat briefly) has served in this regard to highlight the macro in the micro, and the political in the social, foregrounding the dynamic and recursive quality of CSR *in* practice. On the one hand, the analysis has highlighted how middle managers with formal CSR responsibilities assembled and constituted justifications from discourses and repertoires within their worlds of worth, not beyond. A logical implication might be difficulty in stabilizing or progressing forms of CSR practice that cannot be constituted as equivalents to existing situated worlds of worth. The case study findings also highlight how CSR strategizing involved recursive practices of compromise and accommodation, shedding insight into what has often been observed as the opaque, uneven and inconsistent nature of much CSR discourse observed in the public domain. On the other hand, the case data illustrate how a firm with existing repertoires that evaluated the meaning of 'good' through helping others and offering education and advice may reject, deny or ignore new

repertoires that constitute 'good' differently. Whereas, we might have expected companies exhibiting ethical contradictions such as selling tobacco in a healthcare setting to be constituted weakly in the area of civic worth, the empirical findings illustrated how a firm constituted strongly in civic repertoires could, at the level of middle managers metamorphosize these repertoires to accommodate ethical controversy, rather than change it. Analysing the case study findings from the perspective of Boltanski and Thévenot's (2006[1991]) theory has also highlighted how the market and domestic worlds of worth influenced the justifications constituted by interviewees in the case study context. An obvious question here is whether the configuration and relative balance of the different worlds of worth in an organization is a predictor of the type of CSR practice likely to be enacted in such firms. For example, would a firm with more of an industrial or inspirational repertoire naturally incline toward better CSR outcomes on account of a commitment to longer term planning and innovation? And by extension, would CSR practitioners make better progress in enacting CSR strategies by discursively focusing more on repertoires characteristic of these worlds of worth?

Drawing from Searle (2008), a significant observation regarding the case study findings is how many interviewees constituted the organization as benevolent and *good*, even through the object of the tobacco controversy. MacIntyre's (1985) notion of simulacrum, imitations of morality, seems especially pertinent at this juncture. In MacIntyre's book *After Virtue* (1985) we are warned of a dystopian view of human morality as recalled by Malik (2019) in which the:

> *…'democratized self" has 'no necessary social content and no necessary social identity', so the self 'can assume any role or take any point of view, because it is in and for itself nothing.' In this process the crucial distinction between that which is 'good' and that which is 'believed to be good' becomes erased. Once that distinction disappears, there can be no rational foundation to moral claims any more than there could be a rational foundation to scientific knowledge if there were no distinction between that which is 'true' and that which is 'believed to be true'. And with the erasure of the distinction between 'good' and 'believed to be good' comes the carving out of a new distinction: that between facts and values. Facts having been wrenched away from values, nothing is left to temper the wildest flights of the moral imagination.* (Malik, 2019)

Whereas Sonenshein (2005) and Weaver (2006) suggest individual (moral) identity desire may be in certain circumstances a catalyst for generating progressive change, MacIntyre (1985), like

Brown (2019), point to a fragmented individual, constituted precariously even fictitiously, referred to by Boltanski and Thévenot as possessing high degrees of plasticity (2006:16). It is often observed in the CSR literature that small companies talk less and walk more CSR, whereas large firms talk more and walk less CSR (Wickert et al., 2016). Reasons given for this have included the resources available for communications in larger firms. Drawing from Macintyre (1985) and Brown (2019), my research suggests that how individuals are constituted and constitute themselves, not as stand-alone objective units such as 'activists', but according to context-based conditions and in particular situated environments, may shed some light on types of accommodations, compromises and simulacrum constructed by practitioners during CSR practice and an organization's moral competence as enacted by its CSR practitioners.

8.5 Limitations and Future Research

The research has focused on CSR strategizing in a large American retail firm. This is a single case study. Nonetheless, it offers some indications of relevant boundary setting that can be explored in future research. For instance, the case study research showed how: a) CSR practice could be constituted endogenously, in ways that, b) de-agentivised CSR practitioners, and, c) focused on domesticating CSR practices to concord with local context. Building on these three elements as a research framework, interesting future research could include inquiry into what types of business and business model lead to CSR practice that is more exogenously constituted, more agentively responsible and more societally orientated in terms of generating public goods, as opposed to internal ones. For instance, how would new technology companies or finance companies fare as regards this framework? The research suggests that as well as their size (Wickert et al., 2016), other factors such as business model, business sector, which all have a bearing on social and cultural practices, play a significant role in influencing how CSR is internally constituted in the organization.

Contemporary organizational controls have on occasion been termed the 'glass cage' via which governments, employers and others spy on and control individuals, manufacturing the way they feel, and what they are allowed to have feelings about via subtle forms of nakedness and visibility (Gabriel, 2008). As a metaphor *"glass evokes both the glitter and the fragility of organizations in late modernity"* (Gabriel, 2008:311), but *"above all, there is an ambiguity as to whether the glass is a medium of entrapment or a beautifying frame"* (Ibid). As well as offering a sense of employee identity integration, as suggested at times in the case study findings, this research project also suggested that CSR can be a form of coping in organizations

that seem increasingly unstable, precarious and unpredictable. The research brought to the fore CSR practitioners' anxieties and uncertainties, and the antagonistic discourses against which they constructed themselves deploying CSR discursively to manage these uncertainties. On the one hand, future research studies could seek to explore, in different contexts, the attractiveness of CSR to top managers for managing emotions and uncertainties in the workforce, and consider the extent to which CSR has become a staple in the business management landscape as a form of social management. On the other hand, future research into middle managers' CSR practice might explore more closely how they construct CSR as a resource to 'feel good', but also to hide or escape from unwanted identities and realities in the wider organizational setting.

During the course of my research I reflected a number of times on the question of gender, how CSR was representational of a caring profession and how women in particular seemed to be drawn to the CSR roles. It was also interesting how some terms used derogatorily to undermine CSR were at the same time feminine terms. Future areas of research could explore the role and significance of gendered discourses in CSR practices, and how CSR might institutionalize gendered roles of women as carers and subordinates. Other themes that could be developed further in this thesis include that of power and temporality.

9: Conclusion

9.1 Introduction

> *Where thoughts come from, whence meaning, remains a mystery. The page does not write itself, but by findings, for analysis, the right ambiance, the right moment, by reading and rereading the accounts, by deep thinking, then understanding creeps forward and your page is printed. (Stake, 1995:73)*

In the discussion in chapter 8 I brought together the key themes guiding my interpretation and reflections on the case study findings. I would not say these are a 'cohesive' account, although the theme of identity work in the context of a large corporation emerged as central and salient. That said I did not set out, as my research questions illustrate, to investigate the relationship between CSR practices and identity, so a permanent struggle in my rereading of the research material was ensuring that I was *"investigating what I intended to investigate"* (Kvale, 1996:88), while simultaneously being open to new meanings and understandings emerging from the research findings. While not 'cohesive', as there are many ways to interpret these findings, my ontological and epistemological perspectives provide a coherent and holistic framework in which the different readings I develop may not always agree with each other, but do speak to each other.

9.2 The Three Readings Taken Together

Other approaches to the readings in chapter 8 could have been taken. For example, a Bourdieusian reading focusing on fields of practice as capital and habitus might have highlighted the *"symbolic violence that is exerted in strategy as a practice"* (Gomez, 2015:185), or explained *"how and why actors enact the particular, distinct and sometimes contradictory practices that enable the persistence of different fields"* (Anesa et al., 2019). However, I decided to focus my readings in ways that would explore further underlying philosophical questions about the nature of *doing* moral agency in complex, modern and often messy organizations (Tsoukas, 2018; Sonenshein, 2005; Weaver 2006), and what it means to be *good* and act in *good* ways in organizations. In line with Tsoukas' (2018) argument about the potential virtuosity of strategy practice, chapter 6 illustrated how contextualised meanings

connected with being a *good* strategists and delivering *good* strategy deafened other meanings of *good*. Chapter 7 on the other hand, showed how, rather than facilitating CSR practitioners "*toward unearthing thick moral principles and any contradictions between those principles and practices"* (Sonenshein, 2005:476), contradictions and inconsistencies in their discursive positioning and practices engendered compromises in moral principles.

In line with Clarke et al.'s argument that *"managers' identity work constitutes a continuing quest to (re)-author their selves as moral beings subject to organizationally based disciplinary practices" (2009:324)*, the case study sheds insight on the elements that may inhibit moral agency in organizations (Weaver, 2006). Specifically, it foregrounds the truth effects of strategy discourses (Knights and Morgan, 1991) that render strategy as the embodiment of success offering a promised land of rewards, thereby cementing its unquestionable nature. The case study offers an empirical example of how such incontrovertibility sustains moral compromise, in which CSR practitioners may mask or surrender their thick moral principles for thinner ones. In this respect, the case study has provided one example of Sonenshein's call for *"a greater emphasis on sociological, anthropological and psychological approaches to understanding the already existing thick standards inside of many business organizations"* (2005:476).

9.3 Contribution

My thesis contributes to academic debates in the organization studies and CSR literatures about the nature of CSR strategizing. I have approached this from the perspective of *doing* CSR in complex, modern and often contested, messy organizations (Mintzberg, 1994; Quinn, 1988; Sonenshein, 2005; Tsoukas, 2018; Weaver 2006). Stressing the contingent and precarious nature of the individual (Harding, 2008), I have investigated the discursive way in which CSR practitioners (as middle managers rather than CSR professionals as discussed by Risi and Wickert (2017) and Brès et al. (2019)) appropriate and enact CSR. Informed by strategy as practice approaches, my thesis foregrounds practices as entwined with the practitioner (Jarzabkowski, 2015) who is constructing the self on a fluid basis (Brown, 2019) in response to multiple conflicting and antagonistic discourses (Hall, 1996). These contextual conflicts and antagonisms, well noted in the organization studies literature, but less central in the CSR literature, situate the CSR practitioner and their practices at the epicentre of organizational struggles for moral legitimacy, and at the centre of debates on how moral and social responsibilities in companies are enacted. The thesis has engaged with these organizational

members both as carriers of practice (Reckwitz, 2002; Shove et al., 2012), and key managerial agents shaping CSR.

The findings contribute to the literature in four ways. First, the research offers an empirical example of how CSR practitioners appropriate CSR discourse as a flexible resource for various forms of identity work (Brown, 2015), invoking CSR to construct preferred realities as regards self and their organization, in particular desires for moral certainty (Knights and Clarke, 2014). In this respect, the case study sheds light on the social practices constituting the internal dynamics of CSR (Aguinis and Glavas, 2012; Basu and Palazzo, 2008; Gond et al., 2017). It expands debates about CSR as 'aspirational talk' (Christensen et al., 2013) by exploring how CSR practices can be grounded in identity constructions intimately entwined with localised antagonistic discourses associated with the workplace setting (Clarke et al., 2009). The case study also offers an example of how CSR discourse grounded in identity construction can generate self-referential and self-enclosed CSR talk that favours CSR practices as narrative making talk (Christensen et al., 2013; Schoeneborn et al., 2019).

Second, the case makes an empirical contribution to the identities and ethics literature by offering an example of how identity work (Brown, 2015) interfaces with discursive processes of neutralization (Umphress and Bingham, 2011). By exploring how CSR practitioners perpetuate, forgive or rationalize practices they view as morally incoherent or at odds with stated organizational CSR ambitions, the case offers a glimpse of how internal criticism on ethical issues can be inhibited (Sonenshein, 2005). It also contributes to theoretical conversations about the circumstances in which individual moral identity ambition may (or may not) lead to better organizational moral outcomes through processes of positive organizational identity association (Weaver, 2006).

Third, the findings contribute to the strategy as practice and practice literatures by showing empirically how discursively observing the performance of different, sometimes competing, localised strategy discourses can constrain the enactment and maintenance of new practices (Seidl, 2007; Shove et al., 2012), in this case CSR practices (Carollo and Guerci, 2017; Hengst et al., 2019; Wickert and De Bakker, 2018). The findings show how such adherence can lead to fragmented and disconnected CSR practices (Anesa et al., 2019), and the implications on uneven, contradictory or selective outcomes (Soderstrom and Weber, 2019). In the strategy as practice field, the findings also contribute to debates about the linkages between practices and

practitioners by shedding light on how fragmented practices are entwined with fragmented role and identity construction.

Fourth, the findings extend debates about the role and identities of CSR practitioners (Brès et al., 2019; Brès and Gond, 2014; Risi and Wickert, 2017; Wright and Nyberg, 2012) in particular as middle managers by exploring sociologically how context enables and constrains them. In this respect, the findings offer an empirical example of the precarious and fragmented selves CSR practitioners may construct in the context of real or perceived antagonisms toward corporation practices on the one hand, and on the other, internal organizational discourses privileging strategy practices. This adds to literatures on inconsistencies in CSR outcomes (Christensen et al., 2013; Schoeneborn et al., 2019) by articulating a link between the discursive constitution of CSR practitioners and their practices.

Taken as a whole, the thesis' findings theorise that the greater a CSR practitioner's sense of the antagonisms toward a firm (whether related to the genre of the corporation, a particular sector type such as pharmaceutical or gas and oil, or a particular egregious event), and the more rapacious the internal observance of strategy discourses, the less likelihood there may be of CSR practitioners constructing a coherent and agentive moral self as a CSR practitioner, or coherent and agentive CSR practices.

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Appendices

Appendix 10.1 Glossary of terms

Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR): This thesis follows the definition of CSR as a firm's *"actions that appear to further some social good, beyond the interests of the firm and that which is required by law"* (McWilliams and Siegel, 2001:1).

In this thesis CSR is taken to include: *"Social (social responsibility, social performance, corporate citizenship, philanthropy/philanthropic, charity/charitable, community, volunteer/ volunteerism, social compact); Environmental (environmental responsibility, environmental performance, sustainability, green, ecology/ecological, conservation, pollution, nature/natural); Ethics (ethics, morals, values, corruption, ethical/unethical, crime/criminal, integrity); and Stakeholders (stakeholder/s, stakeholder relations, stakeholder theory, stakeholder management, accountability, accountable, reputation/reputational)"* (Lockett et al., 2006:121).

Enactment: I have adopted the word 'enactment' from Lockwood et al. (2019) to reflect the performance of practice as described by practice scholars. Lockwood et al. define enactment as: "*Although there is no single definition for the mechanism of enactment, we build from work by Weick, Sutcliffe, and Obstfeld (2005: 414) that describes enactment as encompassing the "sensemaking activities of noticing and bracketing . . . [that] begin to change the flux of circumstances into the orderliness of situations." Enactment thus attends to how words are effective through the ongoing creation of a shared reality. Unlike resonance, which appeals to the minds and hearts of words' recipients, enactment implies a tighter connection to "doing" or "performing" by being more grounded in practice. In enactment, words do not straightforwardly describe the world, nor do they serve as mere tools for persuasion or argumentation. Instead, words constitute reality and affect organizational outcomes by creating a shared sense of reality that brings phenomena into being, "laying down conditions of possibility that define who and what is normal, standard and acceptable" (Meriläinen, Tienari, Thomas, & Davies, 2004: 544). Work in this vein suggests the analytic inseparability of language and action, taking perhaps most seriously the notion of a "speech act" (Searle, 1969, 1995) and sensemaking" (Weick, 1995). In this perspective, language ostensibly fails to do things—for instance, guide social evaluations or enable cooperation— when the meanings and norms conveyed linguistically are not manifest in action that contributes to a shared reality."* (Lockwood et al., 2019:23)

Praxis is the word adopted to refer to accumulative and sustained situated practice (as opposed to practices). Throughout this text I mostly refer to **practice** to capture sustained practices. I do refer to praxis in relevant theoretical discussions to be consistent with original authorial use.

Appendix 10.2 Interview lists

CSR roles and responsibilities
Energy consumption
Environment, waste and recycling
Procurement (paper; suppliers; ethical sourcing)
Medical and clinical
Supply chain (e.g. transportation, chemicals)
CSR team
Employee engagement (e.g. volunteering)
Philanthropy
Cause marketing campaigns (various)
Mental health and wellbeing
Diversity and inclusion
Product sustainability
Health and safety
Clinical Pharmacy (immunisation program)
Communications (reporting)
Oncology, disease management
Property and operations
CSR Champions
Talent, learning, diversity, inclusion
Supplier diversity
Government relations
Sustainability
CSR champions

Level	Number of inter-viewees
Director	9
Global director	3
Departmental managers	2
Vice president	10
Manager	8
Team coordinator	4
Thematic manager	2
Senior manager	5
Associate manager	1
Regional manager	1
Total	45

Role distribution	
Number of partial CSR roles	34
Number of full-time CSR roles	11

Male/Female	Years at firm	Interview Duration
F	2.5	41:50
F	19	38:49
M	6	1:04:52
M	1	56:58
F	4	35:08
M	20	58:33
M	2	1:09:57
M	12	18:30
F	1	48:54
M	5	1:04:25
M	5	1:04:23
F	10	1:35:03
F	6	25:17
M	5	27:37
M	24	1:42:47
F	9	55:49
M	7	31:00
M	5	43:39
F	2.5	40:44
M	20	56:11
F	30	37:13
F	13	44:32
F	13	33:28
F	12	1:25:00
F	1	44:53
M	3.5	54:58
F	3	54:27
M	2.5	36:39
F	14	1:17:43
M	9	55:12
M	5	49:35
M	24	50:42
F	19	32:06
M	15	55:07
F	7	35:41
F	1	38:30
M	39	1:02:31
M	12	50:33
M	16	51:05
F	2	46:40
M	19	54:57
M	42	51:26
M	6	53:18
F	30	28:35
M	16	1:14:00
2nd int		40:35
2nd int		43:50
		49:20 (39:32:46)

Appendix 10.3 Pilot study report

Pilot Study
(Conducted between 13.12.16 and 13.1.17)
Strategy: talk and context

A discursive exploration of CSR strategizing

Research methodology: *Philosophy and method: reflections from the pilot*

As research based in a social constructionist philosophy and therefore, an inductive approach, the interviews seemed at times realist, rigid and deductive. I have three reflections to make on this.

First, a certain amount of factual clarification is needed to understand the context, presumably this will be less as the research develops. However, it seems to confirm that the socially constructed is actually bounded to some degree by certain conventions, as illustrated in pilot interview four. There, the interviewee gave the example of the brand's social purpose situated within an organizational wide marketing segmentation process, thus illuminated the fact that conventions attached to business segmentation process demarcate the construction of the social purpose.

In addition, the language of business comes across in several of the interviews as very positivist and functionalist. Interviewees talked candidly about business principles that must be met and negotiated: KPIs, performance targets, return on investment, cost benefit, P&Ls. etc. At times, it was difficult to pass such a functional understanding of the context. For instance, pilot interviewee three at one point read the definitions of the brand process from the computer screen. Such a rigid functionalist context, which interviewees may well regard and offer as "correct" knowledge, can hinder access to sociological perspectives, in a way that researching people's attitudes to climate change, or gender equality, would not.

Second, I'm not asking interviewees to construct a reality with me as interviewer in the interview, as might be the case in a very pure form of social constructionism taking a sense making approach and using ethnographic methods. Rather, I'm asking the interviewees to relay their experiences, perceptions and conversations, not because the research is deductionist in approach and seeks to "really" know what happened, but because the discursive approaches in those retold conversations provide rich data for analysis of how those individuals construct their world. However, as such, my research sits closer to the edge of interpretivism and realism, than say a more extreme nominalist approach. There is also, I perceive, some difficulty with my external status as an academic which needs to be addressed. Pilot interviewees one and four rarely strayed from the scripted conversation.

Third, as a researcher, I realise I use provocative or direct questioning sometimes (which may appear deductive) to elicit responses from the interviewee, as a method for surfacing as much knowledge as possible. In this respect, I'd also add that I found the semi-structured questionnaire constraining, as when opportunities arose in conversation, I did not always take them, for fear of roaming or being disloyal to the questionnaire….

Considering these factors, one of my first adjustments would be to communicate in advance more strongly with interviewees about the type of research I am doing and my research

interests. This should entail explicit rejection of fact finding and "corporate" views, and express interest in personal experiences and individual reflections.

Another adjustment in the epistemological approach needs to be how knowledge is created during the interview. Creating rich data requires more emphasis on relaying accounts, conversations and past experiences, and gathering recounts of what was said.

The exploratory pilot also revealed that some questions worked better than others. In particular, the questions about enabling and constraining did not resonate. More successful approaches included questions about developing buy in and negotiating. However, what is clear from the pilots overall is that those who spend 100% of their time developing the CSR work have a lot of knowledge to contribute to the research, and those who are doing it as one of many responsibilities have much less knowledge, but that does not mean what they contribute is any less significant.

Research aims and questions: *Initial assumptions and observations*

The **discourse of strategy** per se, does not appear to be a fruitful course of research in this context. However, associated elements of it (KPIs, P&L, etc.), and the business language, do appear to make up the taken-for-granted way of understanding strategic ends.

Direct questioning on issues of **power and struggle** did not bear fruitful responses during the pilot study. Though, most interviewees spoke of a strong level of struggle in practice between implementing long term goals (sustainability) and delivering on short term goals (business targets). The research therefore needs to explore to what extent this is indeed a practical problem, or a form of deeper resistance, presented as a practical problem.

The initial 5 pilot interviews suggested a stronger **personal** content than first considered, both in respect of CSR practitioners and those they seek to persuade. The interviews also indicated a strong link between the interviewee's professional and role identity, and the way they develop their responsibilities. On account of a 65-70% female workforce in the U.K., it was also suggested that gender is an important consideration in CSR strategizing. Further consideration of this topic is need to understand more meaningful knowledge in this area.

Documentary analysis: A new CSR strategy was agreed by the board on 6 December 2016. As yet I still do not have a copy of that strategy, although I have seen one or two pages… It is called a transformation plan.

Timing/context: The key CSR/sustainability focus over 2017-18 is on implementing this plan.

Thematic analysis: An initial attempt at coding one interview proved somewhat difficult. In hindsight, it would seem more effective to code only once a large number of interviews are complete.

Appendix 10.4 Interview guides (1-4)

Provisional interview guide (1): CSR strategizing

29 March 2016, sent to WBA during access conversations.

Introduction

This doctoral interview is conversational in style, there are no right or wrong answers, all conversation is relevant to the topic being explored. At the heart of my research interest is how participants discuss the topics raised. This provisional guide will be modified on the basis of an analysis of organizational documents prior to interviews.

The interview will start with:

1. Recording the interviewee's job title, the length of time with the firm, and gender.
2. A general discussion about the research, consent issues and data management.
3. General discussion about the person's role, responsibilities and background.

Research discussion points

The following research points will guide the interview.

A. Interviewee's meaning of CSR strategizing.
Please describe how you strategize within the organizational context, this may cover:

- How you strategize in your area of responsibility
  (Prompts: For example, using plans, workshops, building alliances, other)
- The usefulness of strategy concepts such as PEST, SWOT, competitor analysis, etc.,
- How CSR strategizing has changed over the last cycle (during your time here)
- Lessons learnt from past experiences of CSR strategizing
- How you participate in strategy discussions across the organization
- The relationship between your planning/strategizing and other organizational strategies
- How you see CSR strategy within the context of other organizational strategies
- The social conventions regarding strategy and how it is enacted
-

B. How is CSR work developed and implemented?
Please describe how you get your work done within the organizational context, this may cover:

- How you motivate others to cooperate with getting the work done, including examples
- How you decide how to move forward
- How you create and sustain momentum for the work
- How you develop buy-in, including examples

- What enables your CSR work
- What constrains your CSR work
- How you negotiate CSR goals in a context of competing priorities
- How you deal with resistance to CSR themes
- How you deal with organizational politics
- How you establish legitimacy for CSR strategy
- How you position your CSR work

C. **How people perceive CSR work and those with CSR responsibilities.**
   - How do you consider/perceive your role in the organization?
   - How do you think others consider/perceive your role in the organization? For instance, do others perceive you as "doing good" or the contrary?
   - How does the perception of others about the role help, or, constrain your work?
   - How do you exercise agency/assertiveness in the role?
   - How do you establish personal credibility?
   - Is power an issue in the role? How does it manifest?

D. Is there anything I should have asked and did not?

Thanks!

Kerrie Howard, PhD Candidate
School of Management | University of Bath | BA2 7AY
Mobile: [redacted] | Email: keh43@bath.ac.uk

Revised interview guide (2): CSR strategizing

17 January 2017: Field Trip 1 - Revised on basis of exploratory pilot study and provisional research

Introduction: This doctoral interview is conversational in style.
The interview will start with:

- Recording the interviewee's job title, the length of time with the firm, and gender.
- A general discussion about the research, consent issues and data management.
- General discussion about the person's role, responsibilities and background.

Research discussion points: The following research points will guide the interview.

A. **Interviewee's understanding of CSR strategy:**
   - Please describe your understanding of CSR strategy from a personal point of view, both conceptually and in practice (prompts: For example, using plans, workshops, building alliances, other)
   - How has your understanding of CSR strategy changed during your time here?
   - How do you participate in strategy discussions across the organization?
   - What in your view is the relationship between CSR strategy and other organizational strategies?
   - What does "licence to operate" mean to you?

B. How do you develop and implement the CSR strategy:
   - Please describe how you develop CSR strategy, how you develop cooperation, buy-in and credibility? Can you give an example?
   - How do you decide how to move forward, and keep CSR on the agenda?
   - How do you negotiate CSR goals in a context of competing priorities and time frames of short and long-term goals? Can you give examples of conversations you've had?
   - Can you describe any instance where you had to overcome resistance to CSR themes, what did you say to people? How easy is it to be assertive in the role?
   - How do you deal with organizational politics, and how do you position your CSR work?
   - What's the most difficult part of your job? What will you be doing differently this year?

C. How people perceive CSR work and those with CSR responsibilities.
   - As someone with CSR responsibilities, how do you perceive your role & contribution to the business?
   - Do you think others see it that way?
   - How do you establish personal credibility?
   - What drives you to pursue the CSR work?
   - Why do you think you came to be in this role?

D. Is there anything I should have asked and did not?

Revised interview guide (3): CSR strategizing

26 January 2017: Revised Field Trip 1

Introduction: This doctoral interview is conversational in style, no right or wrong responses; it's about views, opinions and perceptions. It is anonymous. Confirm consent.

Research discussion points: The following research points will guide the interview

A. Interviewee's background

- Please tell me about your background, previous jobs and training, the roles you've had at Walgreens, how you came to be in your current role, and responsibilities in this role.

B. Interviewee's understanding of CSR strategy:

- Please describe what CSR means to you from a personal point of view
- Please describe your understanding of CSR at Walgreens
- Please describe how you understand CSR strategy
- How has your understanding of CSR strategy changed during your time here?
- What in your view is the relationship between CSR strategy and other organizational strategies?
- What does "helping people live happy and healthy lives" mean to you? To the business?

C. How do you develop and implement the CSR strategy:

- How do you participate in strategy discussions across the organization?
- Please describe how you implement CSR initiatives in your area, how you develop cooperation, buy-in and credibility? Can you give an example?
- How do you negotiate CSR goals in a context of competing priorities and time frames? Can you give examples of conversations you've had?
- How do you deal with organizational politics, and struggles when implementing CSR initiatives? Can you describe any instance where you had to overcome resistance to CSR themes, what did you say to people? How easy was it to be assertive in the role?
- How do you know when you've been successful?
- What's the most difficult part of your job?

D. How people perceive CSR work and those with CSR responsibilities.

- What does it mean to work on CSR in a large corporate organization?
- As someone with CSR responsibilities, how do you perceive your role & contribution to the business? How do you think others see you?
- What does it mean to be in this role? Is it all worth it?
- Is WBA doing the right thing? How do you feel about CSR at Walgreens?
- How seriously do you think Walgreens takes CSR? What more could it do?
- Is it significant that Walgreens sells cigarettes in its stores?

E. Is there anything I should have asked and did not?

Revised interview guide (4): CSR strategizing

September 2017: Research Field Trip 2

Introduction: This doctoral interview is conversational in style, no right or wrong responses; it's about views, opinions and perceptions. It is anonymous. Confirm consent.

Research discussion points: The following research points will guide the interview

A. Interviewee's background

- Please tell me about your background, previous jobs and training, when you started at Walgreens, roles you've had at Walgreens, how you came to be in your current role, and responsibilities in this role.

B. Interviewee's understanding of CSR strategy:

- Please describe what CSR means to you from a personal point of view
- Please describe your understanding of CSR at Walgreens
- Please describe how you understand the CSR strategy.
- How has your understanding of CSR strategy changed during your time here? How has it changed since Walgreens became part of WBA?
- What in your view is the relationship between CSR strategy and other organizational strategies?
- How do you see the link, if any, between the brand "helping people live happy and healthy lives" and the CSR strategy?

C. How do you develop and implement the CSR strategy:

- Please describe how you implement CSR initiatives in your area, how you develop cooperation, buy-in and credibility? Can you give an example?
- How do you negotiate CSR goals in a context of competing priorities and time frames? Can you give examples of conversations you've had?

- How do you deal with organizational politics and struggles when implementing CSR initiatives? Can you describe any instance where you had to overcome resistance to CSR themes, what did you say to people? How easy was it to be assertive in the role? How is CSR implemented across the 8,000+ stores?
- How do you know when you've been successful?
- What would make your job easier?
- What's the most difficult part of your job?

D. How people perceive those with CSR responsibilities.

- What does it mean to work on CSR in a large corporate organization?
- As someone with CSR responsibilities, how do you perceive your role & contribution to the business? How do you think others see you?
- What does it mean to be in this role, to be involved in CSR? Is it all worth it?
- Please describe how you see the role of the CSR leaders? How important are these roles? And how do these individuals develop these roles?

E. How people perceive CSR work.

- Is Walgreens doing the right thing? How do you feel about CSR at Walgreens?
- How seriously do you think Walgreens takes CSR? What more could it do?
- How significant is it that Walgreens sells cigarettes in its stores? What, if any, do you think is the impact on Walgreens CSR approach?
- How might this change in the future?

F. Is there anything I should have asked and did not?

Appendix 10.5 Verbal introduction to interviews

Interview a)

INT: Good. So, [name removed], if we could start, there is no right or wrong to this, I am not looking for, it works like this or it doesn't work like that, that is not what I am doing. So, the interview is conversational in style and it is all about your view, your opinions, your perceptions of everything and very much about you as somebody who carries CSR responsibilities. So, first of all, this is just a guide for me to follow but first of all, if you could just let me into a bit of your background and how, the roles you have had before, how you came to be at Walgreens, your training and that kind of thing.

Interview b)

Interviewer: I'll write it up and may quote anonymously from the interviews … yeah?
Respondent: That sounds good, yeah.
Interviewer: OK, all right. So I think, as [names removed] have explained, I'm looking at Walgreens, it's a unique case study of how CSR is implemented and strategized in organizations. So I'm really looking at how CSR is constituted, because we know so much about the external things that people can observe, but we don't know very much about the internal components that make up those external things. Yeah? So I'm –
Respondent: Absolutely, I'm with you.
Interviewer: - so that's the knowledge gap that I'm trying to plug, and the reason I'm interested in doing a case study of Walgreens. So I've got a number of sort of questions, but it's really conversational, [name removed], in style; there's no right or wrong answers to any of this at all. It's all about your perceptions and your opinions and just how you see things. Yeah?
Respondent: It sounds good; you tell me when to stop talking, because I'm good at that.

Interview c)

Int: Okay we're off. Right okay [name removed] it's in the field of management and what I'm looking at is how companies are strategizing in implementing CSR. There's a lot of knowledge about what CSR does for companies, what the outcomes are in terms of company reputation, goodwill, those kind of things. There's very little knowledge about how CSR is constituted in an organization? And how that contributes to what you see on the outside. So it's a case study just of Walgreens.
Res: Wow!

Int: ..which was quite timely and fortuitous because Walgreens is implementing the new CSR strategy, and they've chosen to call it a strategy and all these kinds of things. So, it's a good moment to see how they actually strategize on the implementation of the strategy and what the context factors are internally that shape and configure it. So, I'm not… it's very sociologically based and it's very qualitative …. I'm not, you know there's no right answers to any of this at all. It's all about the people their views, their opinions, and what they think, you know what they in essence are bringing to the table and creating when they're at the table if you like.

Appendix 10.6 Data access request

Ph.D research schedule data collection, Kerrie Howard

Updated further to 26 October 2016 meeting with [names removed], London.

Type of data		
Text	**External documents:** CSR related policy docs CSR reports MoUs or agreements with partners of CSR related work	**Internal documents:** -Meeting minutes -Draft CSR documents -workshop & consultation agendas & outcomes -Strategies (including drafts) -CSR related JDs -Materiality reports/gap analysis/CSR scoping/risk assessment
Interviews with a range of employees throughout the organization	**Direct CSR responsibilities:** Environmental Health and safety Community and charity outreach Diversity and equality Sustainability Supply chain Forced labour/slavery Corruption Staff wellbeing	**Indirect CSR responsibilities:** HR personnel Accounting personnel Marketing Sales R&D
Meeting observations	CSR related meetings Strategy meetings	

Details of interviews		
Preliminary interviews will take place in December 2016 in U.K. The purpose is to: a/. test interview approach b/. gather overall understanding of WBA	Two store managers in U.K. Manager of HR U.K. Head of waste and recycling U.K.	Expected number of interviews is 4-6
A. This initial interview phase to focus on Walgreens, U.S., and take place 23st Jan- 4th Feb 2017 Individuals will be asked to suggest 2 further interviewees (an interviewee process known as cascade interviewing) The total interviewee schedule should include a range of employees from all organizational ranks. Individual interviewees may be senior managers, as well as middle managers and staff The total interviewee schedule should also include a range of employees with diverse organizational longevity	Individuals with responsibilities for partnerships with American Cancer Society Individuals with responsibilities for Get a shot Give a shot and Vitamin Angels program Individuals with responsibilities for Red Nose Day Individuals with responsibilities for in reducing energy consumption Individuals with responsibilities for waste and recycling [with view to special focus on this area] Individuals with responsibilities for deforestation approaches/partnerships 4 store managers Individuals with responsibilities for diversity Individuals with responsibilities for supporting health and wellbeing of employees Individuals with responsibilities in health &safety Individuals responsible for the transparency and traceability process Individuals responsible for discussions with Stakeholder Panel Individuals responsible for ethical sourcing practices (modern slavery act)	Expected number of interviewees in this phase is 25-30
B. Second interview phase: February 2017 Face to face or skype	Additional suggested interviewees from initial phase	Expected number of interviewees is 25
C. Third interview phase: March 2017	Board members: E.g. [name removed] [Names removed] Plus any additional final clarifications/adjustments.	Expected number of interviewees is 4-6

Ph.D research schedule data collection, Kerrie Howard

Second research phase: October 2017

Details of interviews

Second research interview phase to focus on Walgreens, Chicago, the U.S. **As with the first phase of research, individuals will be drawn from a range of employees from all organizational ranks. Individual interviewees may be senior managers, as well as middle managers and staff** **The total interviewee schedule includes a range of employees with diverse organizational longevity**	**2 from HR ([name removed] has already one or two people in mind.).** **[name removed]** **[name removed], marketing** **[name removed]** **[name removed]** **3-4 CSR champions (not from the support office)** **3-4 Individuals participating in the sustainability and environmental network** **3-4 Regional vice-presidents**	**Expected number of interviewees in this phase is 20**

Appendix 10.7 Observations and interactions

Meeting observations

#	Date	Topic	Duration
1	23/1/2017	Progress on CSR strategy implementation	80 mins
2	23/1/2017	CSR external partnership meeting	40 mins
3	23/1/2017	Group call to organize re-use of outdated products	70 mins
4	24/1/2017	Developing CSR champions/Sponsored walks	75 mins
5	April 2017	CSR champion meeting (call)	55:16
6	May 2017	CSR champion meeting (call)	56:50
7	June 2017	CSR Champion meeting (call)	19:04
8	July 2017	CSR Champion meeting (call)	31:30
		Total observation time	7:12:00

Interactions

#	Date	Topic	Duration
1	24/3/2016	Telephone call to HQ U.K.	20 mins
	1/7/2016	Telephone call to HQ U.K.	22 mins
2	26/10/2016	Briefing meeting with global CSR team – U.K.	120mins
3	9/1/2017	Telephone call to U.S.	30mins
4	23/1/2017	Dinner U.S., senior CSR manager	150 mins
5	24/1/2017	Corridor conversation U.S.	10mins
6	31/1/2017	Corridor conversation U.S.	20mins
7	2/2/2017	Visit with CSR manager to 3 stores in U.S.	6 hours
8	22/2/2017	Coffee global director of waste and recycling	I hour
9	23/4/2017	Coffee global director of waste and recycling	1 hour
10	23/5/2017	Debriefing meeting with global CSR team – U.K.	45mins
11	4/9/2017	Telephone call to U.S.	45 mins

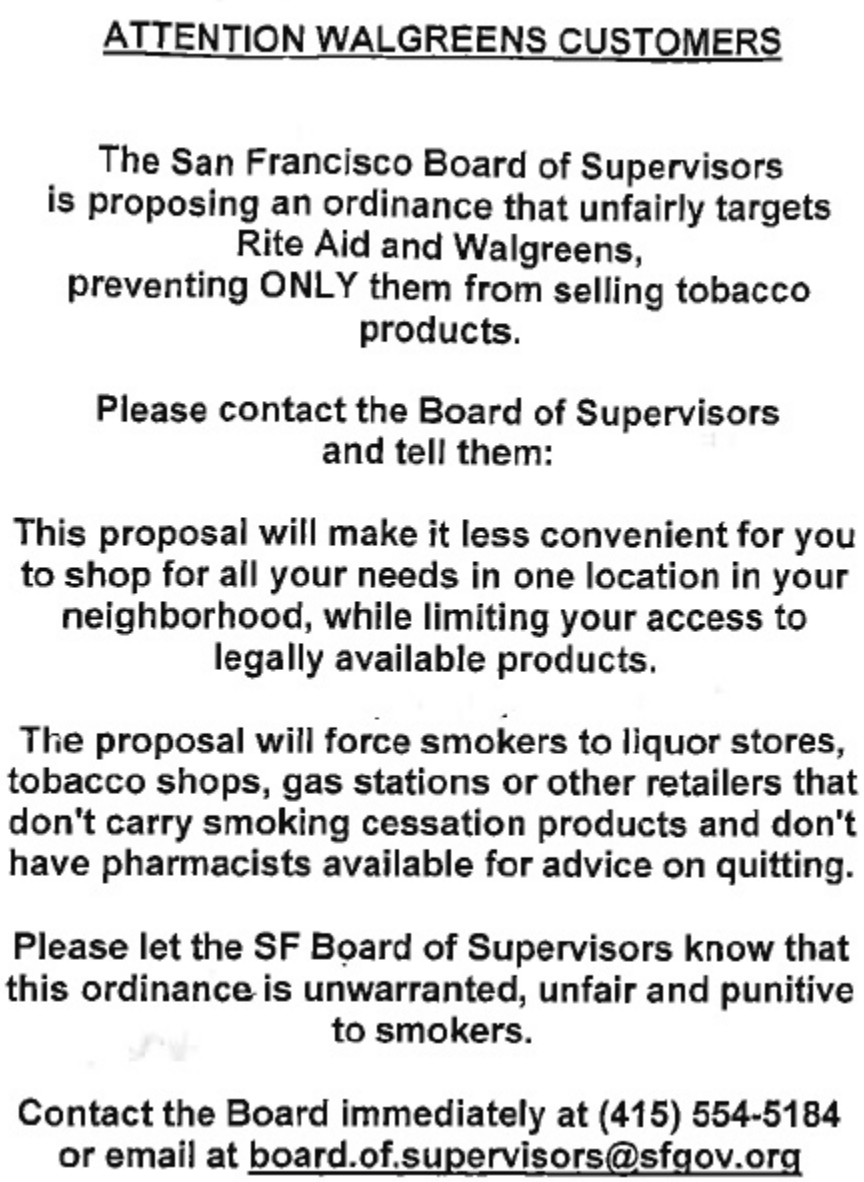
Appendix 10.8 Primary codes

Primary codes
New CSR strategy, implementing CSR strategy (Right thing to do, making savings/reducing costs, customer needs, brand protection, helping others, impact) Material (Report, External accreditations, Structure and focus, smart, intelligent).
Old CSR (doing the right thing, old Walgreens' charity and philanthropy)
CSR contributing to business through innovation, being market leading, licence to operate
CSR increases firm status (UN awards, prizes etc.),
CSR is brand, part of who we are, who we have always been, our identity, caring firm, happy and healthy
CSR strengthens USP, differentiation, brand, firm recognition, credit, brand halo
CSR secures firm place in the future, contribution to world, society and SDGs, gives hope
CSR creates feel good factor, makes us proud,
CSR enables networks and alliances, events, volunteering (internal and external), and empowerment, meaningfulness
CSR creates opportunities to define, to pilot, trial new approaches
CSR creates opportunity for personal achievement, recognition, earning credits, points (success)
CSR makes us special, makes us different, not regular retailer (not CVS)
CSR is opportunity to impact on lives of millions of people
Dealing with hypocrisy, inconsistency, ethical issues, contradiction
Justification for contradiction/inconsistency
Savings/makes money/increases sales, footfall, ROI
CSR is right thing to do/doing the right thing/good
Discord with CSR, copycat behaviour, CSR is just a fad, cynicism
Business targets, KPIs, P&L, increasing footfall
Stores, struggle, communities, pharmacists,
Suppliers and partnerships, deals
Shareholder wealth, profit, agreement/opposition
What customer wants, not preach to the customer, customer choice, what customer cares about
We are a community/convenience retail firm
Cost effectiveness, making money first, loss of sales
Loss of/lack of power/control/resistance
Loss of brand/identity, lack of recognition, credit
Roles (educators, supporting success of others, developing knowledge of others, social- relationships ambassadors, hiding/denying disagreement)
Networkers
Stereotypes
Experts
Leadership
Champions
Personal contribution/credit/victory
Helping others/doing good/ advising others
Influence, persuade, argue, persuade
Inertia
NGOS, other (critical) stakeholders
Outcomes
Employee happiness, well-being, satisfaction
Employee pride

Appendix 10.9 Examples of legal disputes in the public media

Year	Dispute	Sources [Last accessed 21.10.19]
2019	Walgreens Boots Alliance agrees to pay $269.2 million to settle two healthcare fraud lawsuits, alleging the company overbilled government payers, according to the Department of Justice. Under the first settlement, Walgreens pays $209.2 million to resolve allegations that it improperly billed Medicare and other federal healthcare programs for hundreds of thousands of insulin pens it dispensed to beneficiaries who did not need them. The second settlement required Walgreens to pay $60 million to resolve allegations it overbilled Medicaid by failing to charge Medicaid the lower drug prices it offered the public through a discount program.	https://www.beckershospitalreview.com/legal-regulatory-issues/walgreens-pays-269m-to-settle-billing-fraud-lawsuits.html
2016	Walgreens settled with the state of New York over allegations that the drug retail chain misled consumers with its pricing, including value and clearance prices. According to the New York attorney general's office, an undercover investigation showed that Walgreens was overcharging customers compared to the prices displayed in print advertising and on-shelf tags. Walgreens agreed to pay $500,000 to settle the dispute and has agreed to review and correct the allegedly misleading pricing practices.	https://www.lexology.com/library/detail.aspx?g=d1b7be4b-799d-450a-867f-db3cb2d168df
2014	Walgreens agreed to pay $180,000 to a long time employee with diabetes and to implement revised policies and training to settle a federal disability discrimination lawsuit filed by the U.S. Equal Employment Opportunity Commission (EEOC). The EEOC's lawsuit charged that former cashier who has Type II Diabetes, was fired by a South San Francisco Walgreens because of her disability after she ate a $1.39 bag of chips during a hypoglycemic attack in order to stabilize her blood sugar level. Hernandez had worked for Walgreens for almost 18 years with no disciplinary record, and Walgreens knew of her diabetes.	https://www.eeoc.gov/eeoc/newsroom/release/7-2-14b.cfm
2008	Walgreens agreed to pay more than $35 million to settle Medicare reimbursement disputes that resulted from the company allegedly switching three of its drugs from generic drugs to name brand drugs in an attempt to receive higher reimbursement rates. Walgreens agreed to pay the federal government, 42 states and Puerto Rico a total of $35 million, plus investigative costs of approximately $280,000.	https://www.healthcarefinancenews.com/news/walgreens-pay-over-35m-medicare-reimbursement-dispute

Appendix 10.10 Smoking advisory notice



ATTENTION WALGREENS CUSTOMERS

The San Francisco Board of Supervisors is proposing an ordinance that unfairly targets Rite Aid and Walgreens, preventing ONLY them from selling tobacco products.

Please contact the Board of Supervisors and tell them:

This proposal will make it less convenient for you to shop for all your needs in one location in your neighborhood, while limiting your access to legally available products.

The proposal will force smokers to liquor stores, tobacco shops, gas stations or other retailers that don't carry smoking cessation products and don't have pharmacists available for advice on quitting.

Please let the SF Board of Supervisors know that this ordinance is unwarranted, unfair and punitive to smokers.

Contact the Board immediately at (415) 554-5184 or email at board.of.supervisors@sfgov.org

Source: https://web.archive.org/web/20101127082941/http://no-smoke.org/pdf/Walgreens-alert.pdf

[Last retrieved 28.10.19]

Appendix 10.11 Extract from Walgreens' CSR report 2017: 14

Tobacco

During the reporting year, Walgreens reviewed the issue of tobacco sales and engaged with stockholders and other stakeholders who have petitioned us to discontinue sales of tobacco in our retail pharmacies in the U.S. and Puerto Rico. We engaged with these groups to show them how we are addressing their concerns and the many ways we help our customers learn more about quitting smoking and access smoking cessation products. Tobacco has commonly been sold in many U.S. retail pharmacies, which is not the case elsewhere in the world. For example, our Boots stores in the UK and in other countries do not sell tobacco products.

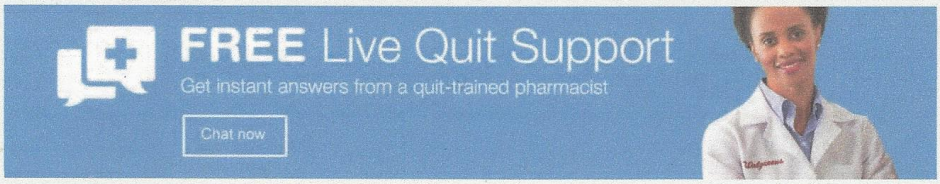
We firmly believe that the most effective step we can take to help smokers quit is to address the root causes of smoking, which go far beyond the small percentage of smokers who access this product at pharmacies. Walgreens is well positioned and committed to offering consumers alternatives and a growing set of solutions to help them change behavior and quit smoking. We believe we can influence people to quit smoking by connecting them with some of the available cessation programs.

Walgreens smoking cessation efforts were expanded in fiscal 2017 and include three main areas: a digital platform with stop smoking answers such as information on quitting, free live quit support and motivational tools such as a personalized quit plan and a calculator to work out the financial advantages of quitting; trained pharmacists in pharmacies and on a 24/7 online pharmacy chat who can support patients and provide information on smoking cessation products; and an incentive and loyalty program that allows people to earn Balance Rewards points for tracking their use of nicotine replacement therapy.

More than 23,000 Walgreens pharmacists have completed training on how to engage with patients on the issue and how to support them in using tobacco cessation products. The training includes video vignettes, scenarios and details that they can use when interacting with patients.

Walgreens also offers a stop smoking program through its healthcare clinics, where staff are trained on smoking cessation, and telemedicine consultations for smoking cessation with board-certified physicians through a program with MDLIVE telehealth provider.

Since its inception in October 2015 and as of 31 August 2017, approximately 140,000 people have accessed the Walgreens quit smoking page, with around 9,000 clicking through to additional support to learn more and talk with a doctor. Approximately 20,000 customers have created a goal to quit smoking through the Digital Health Advisor on the site, around 4,000 have used the smoking calculator and around 49,000 have accessed the Walgreens Tumblr blog where they could view information on how smoking affects their body.



Source: https://www.walgreensbootsalliance.com/content/1110/files/Walgreens-Boots-Alliance-2017-Corporate-Social-Responsibility-Report.pdf [Last accessed 17.11.19]

Appendix 10.12 Boltanski and Thévenot's (2006 [1991]) Worlds of Worth

(Source: Gond, J.P., Leca, B., Cloutier, C. (2015:205). An economies-of-worth perspective on strategy as practice: justification, valuation and critique in the practice of strategy. In Golsorkhi, D., Rouleau, L., Seidl, D. and Vaara, E. (Eds.), *Cambridge handbook of strategy as practice*, pp. 199-219, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press).

Table 11.3 Consolidated overview of eight 'worlds' according to the economies-of-worth framework

'Common worlds'	Market	Industrial	Civic	Domestic	Inspired	Fame	Green*	Project**
Mode of evaluation (worth)	Price, cost	Technical efficiency	Collective welfare	Esteem, reputation	Grace, singularity, creativeness	Renown, fame	*Environmental friendliness*	*Connection, flexibility, adaptability*
Test	Market competitiveness	Competence, reliability, planning	Equality and solidarity	Trustworthiness	Passion, enthusiasm	Popularity, audience, recognition	*Sustainability, renewability*	*Transition from one project to another*
Form of relevant proof	Monetary	Measurable criteria, statistics	Formal, official	Oral, exemplary, personally warranted	Emotional involvement and expression	Semiotic	*Ecological ecosystem*	*Reputation*
Qualified objects	Freely circulating market good or service	Infrastructure, project, technical object, method, plan	Rules and regulations, fundamental rights, welfare policies	Patrimony, locale, heritage	Emotionally invested body or item, the sublime	Sign, media	*Pristine wilderness, healthy environment, natural habitat*	*Project, networks*
Qualified human beings	Customers, consumers, merchants, sellers	Engineers, professionals, experts	Equal citizens, solidarity unions	Authorities	Creative beings, artists	Celebrities	*Environmentalists, ecologists*	*High-social-capital, adaptable individuals*
Time formation	Short-term, flexibility	Long-term planned future	Perennial	Customary part	Eschatological, revolutionary, visionary moment	Vogue, trend	*Future generations*	*Time of the project*
Space formation	Globalization	Cartesian space	Detachment	Local, proximal anchoring	Presence	Communication network	*Planet ecosystem*	*Network*

Source: Adapted from Boltanski and Thévenot (2006: 159–211).
* Thévenot, Moody and Lafaye (2000: 241).
** Boltanski and Chiapello (1999: 161–92).